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ABSTRACT

Consensus and visitation moderation are applied to Year 10 and Year 11 English and mathematics with the aim of achieving comparable standards across the Northern Territory (Australia). Additional aims are to provide professional support and inservice for teachers and to improve performance standards. Moderation involves meetings of teachers and subject moderators at the beginning of the year and at intervals to reach a consensus on gradings of student achievement. To study the process in the Northern Territory, 14 observations were made of consensus moderation and moderators' visits to the schools. Questionnaires about moderation procedures were completed by 67 English teachers, 68 mathematics teachers, 32 administrators, and 274 Year 10 students, and 177 Year 11 students. While administrators found many problems with the moderation process, they generally felt that the teachers and the school benefitted from the procedures. Most students thought that moderation was a fair method of assessment, and they liked being able to compare grades throughout the Territory. Teachers thought that moderation provided them with valuable feedback, but often disliked the amount of time the process required. Fifteen tables and 25 graphs present study findings. Three appendixes contain the questionnaires for administrators, teachers, and students. (SLD)

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Curriculum and Assessment

Research and Evaluation Report Number 5, 1991

MODERATION PROCEDURES IN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS IN YEARS 10 AND 11 IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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for the
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Project Team:

Anne L Richards, Data analysis & report writing
Susan Luong-Van, Data collection

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FOREWORD

I would strongly commend this study to those with an interest in moderation. I very much enjoyed reading it. It is a mine, rich in detail, from which the careful exploiter can extract much that is illuminating and provocative of thought. And perhaps this is also its weakness, in that the data is so rich and profuse that any reader is likely to find evidence to confirm already formed views.

It is noteworthy too, for running contrary to the conclusion of two recent researchers: 'One cannot ignore the remarkable dissociation of reform from evaluation, especially when the reform in question is so closely tied in rationale and justification to evaluation itself' (Elwin, and Glass, 1991, p76). This is a worthy evaluative study of a significant innovation in the field of assessment.

What does emerge clearly is that in the perceptions of most of those involved with moderation in Years 10 and 11 English and Mathematics, the concept is very worthwhile and works well in practice. This initiative which is now some five years into development is clearly worth continuing with change taking place in an evolutionary way.

The reader should be cautioned as to the overall sample – we have here only the perceptions of many who are involved. Thus there is little indication of potential problems in group work such as the roles some assume and group-think. We do not know the views of those who did not respond. Nor do we have views of those uninvolved in processes who might be expected to give more objective opinions based on other criteria.

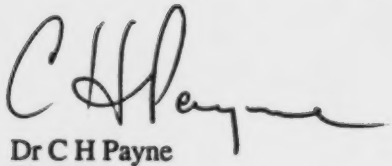
I cannot resist pointing out, from a personal view, some of the ironies. Reference to the stress placed on teachers to extract work from unmotivated students strikes a familiar chord – surely this has been the recurring complaint of teachers since the beginnings of recorded history and is both the challenge and chimera of the teacher's lot.

Not so many years ago virtually all secondary children had exercise and text books for each subject and were responsible for ensuring they had the correct materials for each class. Now a large group of respondents believe students cannot look after their own folios or files. It seems we have lost something – something that may be of considerable value as a generic skill in getting oneself organised to be really independent. As one comment records: 'Year 10 have not learnt to keep things that may be valuable at a later date...'. Perhaps we need to reconsider the expectations we have of students.

Some of the problems of moderation as it is conceived here obviously need working on. The question of authentication of student work needs close examination. Whether it favours the teacher's perception of the ideal student or, as one commented, it advantages 'the talented as opposed to the hard working' entails considerable thought about what we are assessing. The common perception that there is more work for the teacher in teaching moderated subjects really begs the question of what should be expected from teachers in the way of workload. Similarly we need to look at what really constitutes 'undue stress' as there's no progress without some stress and 'undue stress' is probably as much related to the individual personality as to the work demands. Cost-benefits analyses are difficult but we need to come to grips with them as the moderation examined here is resource hungry and there have to be compromises. The role of superordinates receives scant attention but it is obvious their supervision should be concerned from the professional viewpoint largely with moderating i.e. everyone in a promotion position should have a moderation function. Claims that certain groups are disadvantaged by the process raises the issue of what we are really trying to assess – competence or assumed competence, but for what?

Both for its content and for the thinking it crystallises, this report is well worth the time it takes to digest. It's fascinating to sit in on meetings as an impartial observer. Finding one's

thinking out-of-step with the majority is always good ground for reflection but not necessarily for change. Obviously there is a lot of disagreement about moderation despite the general approbation and we do need to work through the issues.



Dr C H Payne
Chairman
Northern Territory Board of Studies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study was carried out during 1990 of the moderation procedures which operate for Mathematics and English in Years 10 and 11 in the Northern Territory. The study involved observations of school visits by moderators and consensus moderation meetings, interviews with subject moderators and assistant moderators, and the administration of questionnaires to school administrators, teachers and students. Comparative information was obtained on moderation approaches employed in other States and Territories of Australia.

In the Northern Territory, consensus and visitation moderation are applied to Year 10 and Year 11 English and Mathematics with the main aim of achieving comparable standards across the Territory. Additional aims of moderation are to provide professional support and inservice for teachers and to improve standards of performance. Consensus moderation involves initial meetings of teachers and subject moderators at the beginning of the year where criteria for assessment and moderation requirements are discussed. This is followed usually by small internal or regional moderation meetings and a final moderation meeting at the end of the third semester where assessed samples of students' work are examined by teachers and moderators and consensus reached on gradings for each level of achievement.

Comparative information from other States/Territories indicates that Western Australia and Tasmania are the only other States which operate similar forms of moderation to the Northern Territory at the junior secondary level. In New South Wales at the Year 10 level, comparability of standards is achieved through a process of providing performance descriptors for teachers to apply to assessments and through the administration of reference tests in selected subjects which determine the number of grades each school can award in these subject areas. In Queensland, moderation is no longer applied across the State. However, schools are required to have 'work programs' accredited and provide samples of students' work in any subject that is to be reported on the Junior Certificate for the first time. At the junior secondary level in South Australia and Victoria, no form of moderation of courses or teacher assessments aimed at achieving comparable standards operates. At the senior secondary level in these States, visitation, consensus and statistical moderation operate to varying degrees in various subjects. In the Australian Capital Territory there is no form of external moderation or assessment at the junior secondary level. However, at the senior secondary level, courses designed for students intending to go on to tertiary education undergo informal moderation via professional associations for each subject and through a 'moderation day' which occurs once a year, at which teachers for each subject meet to discuss assessment procedures and methods of achieving comparable standards.

To study how the moderation process operates for Mathematics and English at Year 10 and Year 11 in the Northern Territory, fourteen observations were made of consensus moderation meetings and the assistant moderators' visits to schools. During visits to schools it was apparent that assistant moderators are expected to fill a wide-ranging advisory role in addition to their moderation duties. From the observations it was also apparent that the English assistant moderator spends a greater proportion of time with Year 11 teachers than with Year 10 teachers. This is because there are five Year 11 courses, whereas with Year 10 there is only one course. With Mathematics, the assistant moderator spends about 50% of the time during school visits with teachers in each year level.

In addition to the observations, the moderators and assistant moderators were interviewed. The moderators for both subject areas believed that moderation had improved standards and that teachers have benefited professionally by taking part in moderation. They also felt that students have benefited because of common standards and expectations of them to perform. An area of concern for the moderators was the effect of resource limitations on moderation procedures, when funding for travel had limited visits to schools outside of Darwin or prevented teachers from some schools from attending consensus meetings.

A range of topics was covered in the questionnaires that were administered to school administrators, teachers and students. Questionnaires covered specific questions for the target group as well as topics which were common to each group. Topics common to all three groups included: the degree of understanding of the moderation process, the value or benefits of moderation, problems associated with moderation, whether moderation caused undue stress, whether moderation was achieving comparable standards across the Territory, and whether moderation should be extended to other subjects.

In general, administrators and teachers had a good understanding of the moderation process. However, only half of the students could provide an answer which indicated they understood moderation. A greater proportion of English students indicated they had come across the term 'moderation' than Mathematics students and a greater percentage of Year 11 than Year 10 students understood moderation procedures.

Views about the benefits and problems of moderation varied amongst the three groups. Administrators encountered problems with organising suitable relief teachers and supervising classes when teachers were at moderation meetings. This problem often stemmed from the fact that whole faculties were involved with moderation and might be out of schools for several days. Many administrators felt that the time taken for moderation was excessive. Nevertheless, they felt that the school benefited by having feedback on standards and on student achievement and that they themselves and their teachers gained professionally from taking part in the moderation process. Some also felt, however, that too much effort was required of their teachers under the current scheme of moderation.

Teachers also felt that moderation provided them with valuable inservice and professional development and mentioned that meetings were very valuable for exchange of ideas and contact with others in their field. The main problems teachers encountered with moderation included the amount of clerical work involved, the time spent out of school at moderation meetings, getting students to adhere to folio requirements and the interpretation of course requirements. Some felt that moderation was a lot of extra work and that it was more a form of teacher assessment than student assessment.

Students saw different benefits and faced different problems from those of the administrators and the teachers. The majority of students felt that moderation was a fair method of assessment and they liked the idea of being able to compare their grades with others throughout the Territory. Their major concern, especially with English, was completing work for the folio. Approximately half of the students mentioned that they were under a lot of pressure keeping folios up-to-date. Some of the suggestions from students to improve moderation were to reduce the number of pieces necessary for the English folio, to receive more explanation of the process and the work requirements, and to have moderators visit students in class.

In general, administrators, teachers and students thought that moderation was achieving comparable standards and the majority of students and teachers felt that what went in the folio was a true indication of a student's ability. Many of the students felt that more information on their oral English activities should be included in their assessments.

On the question of stress, administrators felt that moderation did not place undue stress on themselves or their students, but that it did cause stress for teachers. Seventy per cent of teachers indicated that moderation caused stress for their students. Over 60% of Mathematics teachers felt that the moderation process caused them undue stress while 40% of the English teachers felt this way.

On the question of extending moderation to other subjects, over half of the administrators and teachers felt moderation should not be extended to other subjects as they considered schools and teachers were under enough pressure from the current moderation procedures with English and Mathematics. Also, 53% per cent of Year 10 students and 69% of Year 11

students thought that moderation should not be extended to other subjects. Their main reason was that they have enough to do in coping with moderation in English and Mathematics.

1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Moderation procedures for Years 10 and 11 Mathematics and English were first proposed in 1982/83 and were gradually introduced over the next four years, with full-time Assistant Moderators being appointed in 1986 for English and 1987 for Mathematics. As the program has been in operation for several years it was an appropriate time to evaluate its effectiveness as it has evolved to date. This report is the culmination of an investigation carried out during 1990 into the moderation procedures as they operate in the Northern Territory. The report provides comparative information on moderation procedures operating in other States and Territories of Australia, describes in detail how the process operates with Mathematics and English at Years 10 and 11 in the Northern Territory and gives a comprehensive look at how school administrators, teachers and students view moderation.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the study were to:

- document moderation processes which operate in education systems throughout Australia
- describe the moderation process as it operates for Years 10 and 11 in English and Mathematics in the Northern Territory
- seek the views of participants about the effectiveness of current procedures in achieving comparability of standards across the Territory
- document informed opinion about the outcomes of moderation in relation to the professional development of teachers
- document the benefits and the problems of moderation as perceived by school administrators, teachers and students
- determine whether the size and locality of the school influences the nature of moderation conducted.

DELIMITATIONS

The study was only concerned with the processes used to moderate NT Board of Studies courses in English and Mathematics at the Year 10 and Year 11 level.

Respondents were limited to teachers, school administrators and students who were directly involved in the moderation processes in English and Mathematics at Years 10 and 11 in Northern Territory secondary schools.

The study did not incorporate any attempt to measure objectively the extent to which moderation procedures had resulted in greater comparability of course assessment between schools.

DATA COLLECTION

Since the study involved a comprehensive survey of the moderation process in Mathematics and English for Years 10 and 11, various data collection techniques were employed. These included interviews, observations, questionnaires and a review of literature relating to moderation procedures throughout Australia.

The evaluation was planned by staff of the Evaluation, Research and Accreditation Section and took place during 1990. Regional Superintendents and school Principals were advised early in the year of the study and how it would be carried out. The initial contact was by telephone, with details confirmed later by letter. It was stressed that data collected would be confidential and that no school or individual would be identified.

Literature Review

To provide a perspective for the study, information on the types of external assessment procedures and moderation in the various States and Territories of Australia was obtained from the relevant literature and by direct contact with education officers in each State/Territory. For the Northern Territory, available documents on moderation were studied and information from these supplemented, where necessary, by discussion with subject advisers and moderators.

Observations and Interviews

Observations were made of both consensus and visitation moderation procedures in operation. The English and Mathematics Assistant Moderators were accompanied to selected schools while they carried out tasks involved in visitation moderation. The selection of visits observed was largely dependent on the timetables of the Moderators. During the year, one or both Moderators were accompanied to schools in all major centres throughout the Northern Territory.

The two Year 11 English consensus meetings in May and October respectively and the Year 11 Mathematics consensus meetings in June were also observed. Fourteen observations were made.

Structured interviews were conducted with the Mathematics and English Moderators and the two Assistant Moderators.

Questionnaires

To gather information from school personnel most directly involved in moderation i.e. teachers, students, and school administrators, questionnaires were administered to each group. All teachers who were involved in moderation for Years 10 and 11 were given the opportunity to complete the teacher questionnaire. School administrators such as Principals and Assistant Principals who had dealings with moderation at the Year 10 and 11 level were invited to complete questionnaires. A sample of Year 10 and 11 students from nineteen of the twenty three secondary schools in the Territory completed the student questionnaire. A total of 650 questionnaires were returned and the answers analysed. (See Appendixes I, II and III for copies of the questionnaires.)

The student and teacher questionnaires were trialled at one of the larger Territory colleges. Since many of the questions on the teachers' questionnaire were used in the school administrators' questionnaire, and the questions relating only to school administrators were discussed with them during visits, this questionnaire was not trialled.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Data analysis varied according to the type of information gathered. Information obtained through the literature review is documented in Chapter 2. Observational and interview data is documented in Chapter 3, with a brief summary of general findings provided at the end of the chapter.

Questionnaire data were analysed separately for the three groups of participants; school administrators, teachers, and students. The responses to each question were computer analysed and summaries of the findings reported in either table or graph form with an accompanying discussion and, where appropriate, direct quotes from participants. This information is reported in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively with each chapter concluding with a summary of the findings from that particular group of participants.

Chapter 7 provides discussion and conclusions and highlights possible issues which may require attention.

2 APPROACHES TO MODERATION

WHAT IS MODERATION?

The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'moderate' as to keep within proper bounds; being fair; to make or become less extreme or severe; and a 'moderator' as someone or something that brings about such conditions. The term 'moderation', as used in the educational field, means the application of processes which standardise or make comparable the education process and judgments concerning its outcomes. In other words, the aim of moderation in education is to achieve comparability of instruction and assessment.

Moderation procedures can be applied to different areas of education to achieve comparability. For example the **aims and objectives** of a total education system, or of a particular course can be moderated to make them comparable to another system or course. The **content** of a subject area or a particular course of study can be standardised, and the **teaching methods** employed can be made comparable through such activities as providing programming models and inservice for teachers. The **assessment** of student performance can be moderated in a variety of ways such as the administration of common tests, comparing student work, guidelines for teachers on required standards, and comparing grades allocated by teachers. In the Northern Territory all of the above aspects of moderation are employed to differing degrees at various year levels and to various subject areas.

The focus of this study was to investigate the processes of moderation as they operate for Mathematics and English at Years 10 and 11 with emphasis on assessment moderation. The assessment of student performance involves moderation of both the procedure and tools of assessment and the student assessments/grades which are the outcome of that procedure. Assessment moderation is an ongoing process, making teachers aware of how and what to assess, moderating assessment instruments developed by teachers and adjusting teacher gradings, if necessary, to make them comparable amongst different schools.

From a range of definitions found in documentation on moderation in the Northern Territory, the following are given to describe assessment moderation:

> *(Assessment moderation) is an external means of checking, comparing and validating internal school assessments (Cockshutt, 1989, p1).*
>
> *...the principal focus of moderation in the Northern Territory is to ensure that as far as possible student results in a given subject are comparable with those obtained by all other students, irrespective of class or school (Watkins, 1988, p7).*

APPROACHES TO MODERATION

In the educational context, moderation can be considered to be a standardising procedure which can be applied to such areas as objectives, content, teaching methods and assessment. As this study focuses on assessment moderation the following provides a summary of the various approaches or models which have been developed to describe the activities in this field. This information was obtained from the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) policy documents on assessment and moderation. The reasons for using these documents are that they are the most comprehensive and that the Northern Territory has close educational links with that State, including the fact that SSABSA is the current assessing body for Northern Territory students sitting SSABSA subjects in Year 12. In addition to descriptive information, comment is provided on the advantages and disadvantages of each of the moderation approaches. This information is based on a Northern Territory study *Report*

Consensus or Group Moderation

Consensus moderation is based on agreement within a group, usually a group of teachers and moderators, on the outcomes of a particular course of study, especially in terms of expected student achievement. It can involve agreement on course content, moderation of expected levels of attainment, moderation of assessment instruments such as school test papers and moderation of final grades awarded by teachers. Although all participants taking part in group or consensus moderation contribute to the final product, it is nevertheless the case that those with the most expertise e.g. the moderators, will exert considerable leadership.

At present, consensus moderation operates in the Northern Territory with Year 10 and Year 11 English and Mathematics. Moderation of Year 10 Science and Year 10 Social Education (previously SACE[1] is being trialled with a number of schools. There is some variation of method between subjects and between year levels and this will be explained in the section 'Moderation in the Northern Territory'. Subject moderators of Year 12 SSABSA courses are also involved in consensus moderation meetings in Adelaide.

The value of consensus moderation is that classroom teachers are directly involved in all aspects of assessment and gain professionally by learning not only how and what to assess, but what standards are expected from their students. One problem with consensus moderation, especially with the vast distances between major centres in the Northern Territory, is the cost of bringing teachers together for meetings not to mention the time teachers are absent from their classes. With reductions in the previous levels of funding, it has been necessary to limit participation in consensus meeting to teachers in the major centres of Alice Springs and Darwin. Consensus meetings have also been combined with other activities such as inservice courses and/or Subject Area Committee meetings to make the most of available funds.

Visitation Moderation

In the Northern Territory moderation visits for Years 10 and 11 Mathematics and English are closely linked with the consensus moderation program. Basically, this model involves a subject moderator visiting schools during the year '...to consult with subject teachers about the work required of students and the levels of attainment which are reached' (Watkins, 1989, p4).

As with consensus moderation, the value lies in involving classroom teachers and their seniors in the moderating process and again the basic drawback is the cost of a moderator visiting all of the schools throughout the Territory which run Year 10 and Year 11 courses. However, both visitation and group moderation are considered to be very valuable for the professional development of teachers.

> ***Visitation** and **group** (consensus) **moderation** procedures not only provide significant opportunities for the professional development of moderators, but they also incorporate the most extensive involvement of ordinary teachers in a formal program of assessment review and refinement (Fowler, 1989, p30).*

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[1] At the time when information for this study was being gathered this subject was known as Social and Cultural Education or SACE for short. To avoid confusion the old name has been retained throughout later sections of the report.

Visitation moderation is also conducted with Year 12 school assessed courses which require a SSABSA moderator, either from South Australia or a Northern Territory moderator appointed by SSABSA, to visit schools to moderate assessment procedures. The moderator also takes part in consensus moderation meetings in Adelaide at the end of the year.

Intrinsic Moderation

> *This approach to moderation comprises standard-setting via an externally applied mechanism usually a public examination or test (Watkins, 1989, p6).*

Because such examinations or tests are based on a common set of syllabus objectives and are set and marked on common criteria, they possess inherent or automatic standard setting. The fact that students study the same syllabus also enhances this moderation effect. No further moderation or adjustment of results is required unless inter-subject comparability is sought.

In the Northern Territory, intrinsic moderation operates with Year 12 SSABSA subjects which have an external examination component. It must be noted that for Year 12 SSABSA school assessed subjects, consensus and visitation moderation also play a role. Intrinsic moderation also applies with Year 10 Mathematics and English in the Common Instruments of Assessments which are set and marked externally. Consensus and visitation moderation are also applied to Mathematics and English for Year 10.

In general, external examinations and tests have public acceptance and, properly constructed, are reliable and valid. They are also '...one of the most cost-effective and efficient ways in which the scholastic attainments of a student population spread over a large geographic area might be assessed' (ibid, p14).

Disadvantages of external testing lie in the fact that not all curriculum objectives involving student performance can be readily assessed in this manner and that 'teaching to the test' may narrow the curriculum. It is possibly for these reasons that external tests and examinations are unpopular with many teachers but there also appears to have been considerable bias in their professional preparation in this regard. Compared to visitation and consensus moderation, intrinsic moderation methods allow for less involvement of classroom teachers and therefore provide limited opportunities for professional development.

Statistical Moderation

This is the statistical application of externally gained results, such as from an examination or reference test, to teacher assessments to 'moderate' them or to adjust them to suit a set standard.

> *In essence statistical moderation means that teacher assessment of student work does not result in a 'final' grade but in one which is suggested or recommended. When students have completed examinations or tests, all results may be aggregated to form a final grade using one of the components to weight the overall scores, or more commonly the suggested or recommended grade will be moderated so that it reflects student performance on the external measure (ibid, p5).*

As statistical moderation is not currently used in the Northern Territory it will not be elaborated on. It is cost-effective but is difficult to explain to clientele and has little potential for teachers' professional development and is often open to methodological criticism.

MODERATION IN OTHER STATES/TERRITORIES IN AUSTRALIA

Moderation in education operates to some degree within all States and Territories in Australia. In each State/Territory education authorities aim at providing equal opportunities and equity for the student population. Some methods of ensuring comparability of the process and product of an education system includes moderating such areas as; subjects offered in schools, minimum requirements for all students to cover, common assessment procedures, and in some cases common assessment instruments. As well as processes operative within States/Territories, there has recently been a push towards defining national parameters for education and determining methods for monitoring levels of achievement. Current trends, although not direct moderation methods as previously defined, include such projects as the ACAP (Australasian Cooperative Assessment Program) 'Assessment Profiles in English' and 'Assessment Profiles in Mathematics' and 'The Reporting of Student Achievement Project'. These are national projects which aim at providing teachers throughout Australasia with common techniques and understandings of standards of student achievement.

To attempt to describe moderation as it relates to curriculum, teaching methods and assessment in each State/Territory would involve analysing the operation of every education authority and a complete breakdown of how their school systems operate. Since the major focus of this study is concerned with the moderation of how teachers assess achievement and the moderation of grades awarded by teachers, this section of the report will focus on what is happening throughout Australia in this area only.

Much of the following information has been summarised from documents produced by the Secondary Education Authority of Western Australia and edited by J Offer, entitled *Moderation Procedures Operating in Australian States and Territories in 1990* and the updated 1991 version. Information has also been clarified through telephone contact with personnel involved in moderation processes in each of the States/Territories.

Australian Capital Territory

At the junior secondary education level (Years 7 to 10) there is no official external or inter-school moderation at present. There is also no form of external assessment e.g. testing, in the junior secondary. However, a green paper *Literacy and Numeracy in ACT Schools* proposing four possible options on assessment was circulated at the end of 1990 with submissions closing 28 February 1991. The options included:

> continuing with the present system whereby each school awards grades which are reported on the ACT Year 10 Certificate issued by the ACT Department of Education
>
> developing profiles, indicating standards at various levels of attainment for selected subjects
>
> administering standardised tests at particular grade levels, similar to those used in NSW schools and which have been produced by ACER
>
> using a combination of subject profiles and sampling with standardised tests.

At the time of writing, responses had been collated and a report was with the ACT Minister for Education awaiting a decision.

Senior secondary education in the ACT offers four types of courses which cater for students' different interests and aspirations. The responsibility of accrediting and registering courses lies with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies, previously the ACT Schools Accrediting Agency, 'an agency established by, and responsible to, the ACT Department of

Education' (Offer, 1991, p4). Of the four types of courses (R, A, T and E[2]), the assessments from the A and T courses undergo formal moderation procedures:

> *Comparability of teacher-generated assessment in both T and A courses is achieved informally through activities of subject-based professional associations and formally through Moderation Day, which occurs once a year and is a pupil-free day during which teachers meet in subject groupings to discuss comparability of standards and assessment practices across the system (ibid, p5).*

In addition, comparability of student assessments at the senior secondary level is achieved by a form of statistical moderation where a student's course scores are scaled against the scores they achieve on the Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT). This process only applies for students aiming at higher education and who have studied courses which result in Tertiary Entrance Scores (TES).

New South Wales

Certificates issued in New South Wales for secondary school students are the Higher School Certificate at Year 12 and the School Certificate which is issued to students on leaving school, provided they are fifteen years of age. This certificate is normally issued to Year 10 students and is accompanied by a Certificate of Achievement which is a record of a student's achievements as determined by the school.

Statistical moderation procedures apply at both the Year 10 and Year 12 levels:

> *The moderation procedures at the School Certificate level involve State-wide administration of two-hour Reference tests in English, Mathematics and Science. These tests are designed to ensure that a grade awarded by one school is comparable with the same grade awarded by other schools...The results of the tests are used to establish the number of grades which can be allocated by a school (ibid. p6).*

It is up to each school to award the allocated grades to its students in Mathematics, English and Science. For all other subjects the school assesses and awards grades. The Certificate of Attainment provides information about which courses students have satisfactorily completed. For each course offered at Year 10 level, student performance is assessed by way of a set of Performance Descriptors for a particular course. Course Performance Descriptors define five possible levels of student achievement (E - A) from 'Elementary Achievement' to 'Excellent Achievement':

> *The Course Performance Descriptors describe the main features of a typical student's performance at each level of achievement in that course. They serve as templates or benchmarks against which teachers will be able to match their assessment records and professional judgement in determining grades for particular students (Information Bulletin, NSW Board of Studies, 1991, pp1–2).*

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[2] 'R' courses are designed for Year 11 and 12 students to 'further the students' social, artistic and/or personal development'. 'A' courses are accredited by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies as being educationally sound and appropriate for students at senior secondary level. 'T' courses are 'A' courses which have been considered as suitable preparation for higher education. The results of 'T' courses can be used in the calculation of Tertiary Entrance Scores (Offer, 1991, pp4-5).

Assessments for Year 12 subjects for the Higher School Certificate undergo statistical moderation. Students studying Board-determined courses sit an external examination and are also awarded a school assessed mark. The examination marks are statistically adjusted, basically to allow a 'normal' distribution of marks. The school assessed marks are also moderated statistically against the scaled examination marks (Offer, 1990, p13).

Queensland

In Queensland, comparability of standards is achieved through several avenues. For students to receive a Board 'Senior' or 'Junior' Certificate, schools are required to enter into a contract with the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and follow set criteria for the administration and assessment of each course. Schools can choose not to follow the Board's curriculum in which case their students are not eligible for Board Certificates. However, the majority of schools work within the Board's educational framework.

In junior secondary schooling in Queensland (Years 8–10) assessment of student performance is carried out internally with schools issuing a Board of Senior Secondary School Studies 'Junior Certificate' at the end of Year 10. The Board now has a 'maintenance' role only, with regard to the Junior Certificate. In 1988 legislation altered the Board of Secondary School Studies to the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies with responsibilities for the Senior Certificate and tertiary entrance procedures. Arrangements are currently again under review.

Previously, schools were required to submit 'Work Programs' to District (or in some cases State) Review Panels of the Board every three years for accreditation. The program of work and assessment had to meet specified criteria in Board syllabuses. Towards the end of Year 10, schools were required to provide samples of a range of student achievements for monitoring by State/District panels. For the past three years this practice has not applied across the State. Because of its maintenance role with the Junior Certificate, the Board accredits Work Programs for schools issuing a Junior Certificate in a subject for the first time and it requires a sample of student work for monitoring in Year 10 only in the first year that the subject is to be shown on the Junior Certificate.

The Department of Education is presently reviewing its P–10 curriculum. The review will report on and make recommendations in two stages. The first report will be concerned with the rationale and elements of P–10 curriculum while the second will be concerned with the documentation and implementation of P–10 curriculum. Accreditation and certification may be reviewed. In October 1990, the Department of Education released 'Focus on Schools', a blueprint for future organisational structures and management processes and a plan for its implementation. This report recommends that a review of the structures and processes used in the management of P–12 curriculum development, implementation, accreditation and student certification be undertaken in relation to all areas of education in Queensland (telephone discussions with Boyd Jorgensen, Studies Directorate, Queensland Department of Education, March 1991).

At present, with Year 11 and Year 12, student assessments are monitored by a form of consensus and visitation moderation. At the end of Year 11, panels check students assessments and provide advice to schools on whether accredited Work Programs have been adhered to and whether the criteria for assessment have been applied consistently within a school (Offer, 1990, p17).

For Year 12, consensus moderation meetings are held in October each year to:

> *review materials submitted by schools and give advice to schools regarding the awarding of exit levels of achievement...The District Panels (made up of experienced teachers recommended by their Principals) provide schools with advice that either the levels of achievement they propose to award are suitable for*

recommending to the State Review Panels or that certain modifications should be considered before such recommendations can be made. The State Review Panels oversee these procedures to ensure a consistent approach across the State, so that they can make recommendations to the Board for certification of student achievement (ibid, p18).

Review Officers (or moderators) are available to visit schools on request to provide advice on such things as preparing submissions for the Board, developing Work Programs, and assessment procedures. Schools are encouraged to hold moderation meetings internally or within a region and '...some 2300 teachers serve on District or State Review Panels' (ibid, p19).

Statistical moderation occurs for Tertiary Entrance Scores where school assessments are moderated against student results from the Australian Scholastic Aptitude Tests (ASAT) (Croply, 1988, p10)

South Australia

In junior secondary schools in South Australia (Years 7–10) all assessment is carried out by individual schools which operate under flexible curricula. There is no external moderation of any type at this level. However, a recent initiative of the South Australian Education Department is the Levels of Attainment Project which aims at identifying six broad levels of attainment in each of eight subjects from Reception to Year 10. Each student will be assessed into one of the six levels in each subject which will provide system-wide data on regions or schools that may indicate disadvantage e.g. if a large proportion of children in a particular school or region fits into the low band levels then this information can be used to determine strategies for improving standards (telephone discussions with Kathy Moyle, Morialta Curriculum Unit, Education Department of South Australia, March, 1991).

If students leave school at the end of Year 9 or Year 10 they receive a Student Achievement Record which includes statements on what the student has achieved while in secondary school.

Although not a form of moderation of student assessments, another project which involves external monitoring of student performance is the Writing and Reading Assessment Program (WRAP), a State-wide cross-curriculum literacy audit involving government, Catholic and independent schools. The survey, which focuses on Years 6 and 10, is based on a stratified random sampling of schools and involves approximately 2000 students at each year level. The performance of special needs groups is a particular focus of both the random sample and further case studies which are being conducted in conjunction with other programs such as the Aboriginal Writing and Reading Assessment Program (AWRAP).

A review encompassing the junior secondary area has currently been commissioned and may have some implications for curriculum and assessment.

Senior secondary (Years 11 and 12) students may choose to follow one of two programs which lead to either the Year 12 Certificate, (issued by the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA)), or the Student Achievement Record which is issued by the school through the South Australian Education Department.

For Year 12, SSABSA prepares and approves subject syllabuses, and determines and directs assessment procedures for each subject. The subjects fall into two categories: Accredited Subjects and Registered Subjects. Accredited Subjects include Publicly Examined Subjects (PES) (examination worth 50 per cent and school assessment worth 50 per cent) and School Assessed Subjects (SAS) (assessed by teachers and the results moderated by an independent moderator visiting schools to ensure comparable standards across the State). With registered

subjects, assessment is done within the school and recorded on the SSABSA Certificate (Offer, 1990, p20).

With Publicly Examined Subjects, school assessments are statistically moderated against the examination result. With School Assessed Subjects, a comprehensive form of visitation and consensus moderation applies.

The moderation process may entail both consensus and visitation moderation, or only visitation moderation, depending on the subject. Consensus meetings are organised by the subject moderator at 'hub' schools and teachers discuss course requirements and expected standards and compare student work. If consensus meetings are not required, the moderator visits '...each school approximately twice a year to discuss the course, activity approaches and assessment strategies' and often visits the class (ibid, p22).

Moderation is a four-phase operation: Phase 1 is mainly concerned with negotiations on the assessment plan that will be used by the school for each subject. Schools must provide students with an assessment plan which describes how the school will assess the student and report the assessments to SSABSA. Phase 2 occurs approximately midway through the course and involves presentation of a range of student assessment to the moderator. Phase 3 takes place at the end of Term 2 or early Term 3 and the '...final assessment package is negotiated, with agreed ratings given to various assessment components...Phase 4 occurs at the end of the course. Student materials, scripts and teacher reports, as required by the Chief Moderator are forwarded to the central moderation venue. A panel of moderators examines the materials and assessments and makes adjustments to ensure State-wide comparability' (ibid, p22).

In 1991, South Australia will adopt a new certificate called the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) to replace the existing SSABSA Certificate. The responsibility for SACE falls to SAABSA and incorporates a set pattern of study over two years (Years 11 and 12). Students must complete twenty-two units of work and record successful achievements in at least sixteen. Compulsory units include Mathematics and English and a writing-based literacy assessment.

Tasmania

A range of moderation approaches is used in Tasmania to ensure comparability of standards for issue of the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE). The TCE shows a student's achievement from Year 9 until leaving secondary education. It replaces both the School Certificate which was issued to Year 10 students and the Higher School Certificate which was issued to Year 11 and Year 12 students.

At the Year 10 level, consensus moderation operates with selected subjects each year with the aim of achieving comparability of standards of assessment. The philosophy behind the moderation process is based on the premise '...that enabling teachers to reach agreement or consensus regarding acceptable standards for student achievement of an A, B or C rating on any given criteria will produce overall awards which should be comparable in standard between teachers of the particular subject and between schools' (The Schools Board of Tasmania, 1990 p1).

The proposed process of moderation for 1991 was that State meetings of Subject Moderation Committees, consisting of the Moderation Adviser and Regional Moderators, would meet in February or March to target the criteria, within each subject, for which samples of work would be collected for consideration at Regional Moderation Committee Meetings to be held in October. In May, 'Regional Moderation planning meetings involving School Subject Moderators and other teachers, together with the Regional Moderator' for each subject, were held to discuss the '...processes and products which will be employed when gathering evidence of attainment for ratings for each of the targeted criteria'. The Regional Meetings

then take place in October to examine samples of work and adjust teacher gradings if necessary (ibid, p2).

Victoria

At the Year 10 level in Victoria, all assessment is done internally and no externally produced certificate is issued.

At the end of Year 12, students receive the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) which is issued by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board.

> *The system of moderation which has been adopted by the Board encompasses three methods of moderation, namely consensus moderation, moderation by visitation and statistical moderation (Offer, 1990, p28).*

The moderation approach varies with subjects. In 1990 consensus moderation was carried out with Art, Computer Science, Latin, Ancient Greek, Geography, Graphic Communication, Music A, Music B, Spanish, Legal Studies, Physical Education, Textiles, Home Economics, Human Development and Society, and Geographical Science. Visitation moderation was applied to Physical Science and Technology and Society, whereas all other subjects for the VCE undergo statistical moderation.

From the end of 1991, a new form of the Victorian Certificate of Education will be issued and the moderation procedures will vary from previous years. In most subjects, common assessment tasks will be employed to give greater comparability of standards. At the beginning of each year, '...panels made up of teachers from eight to ten schools will meet to review the nature and purpose' of each common assessment task and accompanying criteria and grade descriptions for the awarding of grades A to E+. Later in the year each school will be required to forward a list of students in each subject, along with the grades awarded to each and samples of their work, to the moderation panel. At least two pieces of work from each school at each grade level will be inspected to '...verify that grades are being allocated consistently. Further work will be sampled from schools where grading appears inconsistent'. Moderators will visit schools to assist teachers in awarding grades if this is warranted. A final moderation meeting will take place at the end of the year where new samples of work will be scrutinised for verification of teacher gradings. All the work of all the candidates is made available at the final meeting for possible inspection if the panel needs to review further samples of a student's work to verify a grade (Education Quarterly, 1991, p22).

Statistical moderation is applied to school assessments which also have an external examination component. The methods vary slightly with subjects, but, the basic formula is to adjust school assessed scores against the score achieved on the examination.

Western Australia

In junior secondary (Years 8 to 10), individual schools are responsible for assessment of their students' achievements. However, teachers must follow a range of quite stringent moderation procedures with regard to the new Unit Curriculum which was introduced into Western Australian junior secondary schools in 1989. The Unit Curriculum includes units of study with well defined objectives, assessment structures for each unit and grade related descriptors that link student performance with the grade awarded. To achieve comparability of standards, several forms of moderation are employed. These include; advisory visits to schools by School Support Officers and Subject Consultants, moderation review visits each year of ten to fifteen schools across the State to carry out a formal review of moderation procedures and practices in one or two subjects, system-level measures of performance by way of the

Monitoring Standards in Education program, and network meetings which address moderation issues and consider assessment and grading procedures.

Students receive the Certificate of Lower Secondary Studies (CLSS) normally at the end of Year 10. However, they may receive the certificate in Year 9 if they leave school at this stage. The certificate records studies which have been completed under the Unit Curriculum System.

In Western Australia for upper school Accredited Courses, several approaches to moderation are employed by the Secondary Education Authority in an attempt to achieve comparability of educational processes and outcomes. In addition to having detailed syllabuses with prescribed assessment procedures, exemplar materials which show standards in each course, common assessment tasks, assessment support materials and sample tests, consensus, visitation and statistical moderation also operate (Cropley, 1988, p18).

Moderation activities include district seminars which focus on reviewing and refining assessment and grading procedures for Accredited Courses, schools visits by moderators to validate whether schools are operating under Secondary Education authority guidelines, and consensus meetings which are compulsory for teachers teaching courses undergoing moderation. Not all accredited courses undergo consensus moderation every year. Statistical moderation operates with Year 12 tertiary entrance subjects which are statistically moderated against a student's score on the ASAT tests (Offer, 1990, p35–8).

MODERATION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

A form of moderation first came into operation in secondary schools for both Mathematics and English in 1982. A teacher for each of these subjects was released from school duties for approximately four weeks to visit schools with the aim of investigating what was happening and advising teachers on programming and assessment matters. In Mathematics, assessment instruments were collected from schools, analysed for such attributes as their suitability and degree of difficulty, and good items then shared with other schools. This process was duplicated in 1983 when a teacher in each subject 'moderated' for five weeks. In 1984 and 1985 moderation became part of the duties of the then Senior Education Officer in each subject area. In English, 1985 saw the first use of a 'common assessment task'. Students in Years 8, 9 and 10 were required to produce a piece of written work called 'My Town'. Teachers forwarded a sample of the range of students' work for consideration at a consensus moderation meeting. In 1986 the first full-time Assistant Moderator for English was appointed to specifically carry out visits to schools and run consensus meetings of teachers. For Mathematics, the first full-time Assistant Moderator took up duties at the beginning of 1987. 'Assistant Moderators are appointed for a two-year non-renewable term, to ensure that there are always people with recent classroom experience and therefore credibility as practitioner among their peers' (Cockshutt, 1991, p2).

Currently in the Northern Territory, consensus and visitation moderation operate for Years 10 and 11 in Mathematics and English. For each subject, there is a Moderator and an Assistant Moderator. It is the Assistant Moderator's responsibility to organise and carry out moderation activities such as consensus meetings and visits to schools. The Moderator is the Principal Education Officer working in the Curriculum and Assessment Division for these subjects. Moderation is part of the duties of these positions. In schools, both the Moderator and Assistant Moderator are usually referred to as 'the moderator'. Moderation procedures vary between the two subjects and between the year levels. A description of how moderation operates at each year level and for each subject is provided in the the next section of this report.

For Year 12 students currently undertaking SSABSA subjects, consensus and visitation moderation in these subjects is carried out as a joint venture between SAABSA and the Northern Territory Board of Studies. Moderation procedures may alter slightly from 1991 onwards with the introduction of the new South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)

which will replace the existing SSABSA Certificate. SSABSA is introducing some Year 11 moderation in South Australia and the NT Board of Studies is expanding its Year 11 moderation to other subjects.

Year 10 English

All Year 10 teachers are required to follow the Northern Territory 'English Curriculum for Years T–10'. This document is not a syllabus or program of what to do at each year level. Its purpose is to assist teachers to plan their teaching/learning programs most effectively. For students to receive the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Year 10, it is necessary for students to maintain a folio containing evidence of completion of the work requirements for Years 10. To determine if the work done by students and the grades given by teachers are comparable across classes and across schools the staff of the Department of Education carry out visitation and consensus moderation. '...the moderation process aims to ensure comparability of both what is assessed and how it is assessed' (English Curriculum for Years T–10, (Draft) 1991, p21).

With Year 10 English, initial consensus moderation meetings are held in Darwin and Alice Springs in March/April to explain folio requirements and provide information on what constitutes various grades for the course. Due to funding constraints these meetings only involve the teachers from schools in these two centres. However, as part of the moderation process also involves visits to schools by the Assistant Moderator, information is imparted to teachers working in schools outside these two centres during visits and by way of correspondence.

During moderation visits the Assistant Moderator:

> *... advises the teachers whether their understandings of successful student attainment are consistent with those of all the other teachers of the course. Within a school, it is appropriate for the Senior Teacher to act as inter-class moderator...Teachers in the school are required to have their students' folios organised in rank order, according to the teachers' perception of their attainment, with a class rank order list. The Assistant Moderator typically looks at folders on the borderline between the grades, and 'spot checks' other folders. If the teachers' standards are higher or lower than the Territory standard, then the moderator decides by what extent they need to be adjusted (ibid p22).*

Year 11 English

In Year 11, five senior secondary courses are offered for study, two in Semester 1 and three in Semester 2. Teachers of these courses attend a one-day or a half-day consensus moderation meeting at the beginning of the semester and agree on the folio requirements for that course and discuss what constitutes various grades of achievement. The teachers then meet towards the end of the course to verify grades awarded for work produced by students. Each teacher provides folios which are a sample of the range of grades they have awarded to their students. In Year 11 the moderator visits teachers of Year 11 courses once a semester to check progress and advise teachers of any changes necessary in awarding grades or preparing student folios.

> *The moderation process serves the purpose of establishing assessment criteria and standards; and specifically what is 'satisfactory' completion of the minimum requirements of the folio, the qualities necessary for awarding of higher grades (English: General part 2. 2002S, 1989, p34).*

In larger schools which have more than one class doing a particular English course, internal moderation of student work is encouraged. This may involve teachers meeting to discuss

work requirements and compare student folios and to agree on standards for the awarding of various grades.

Year 10 Mathematics

> *In the Northern Territory schools Mathematics is studied at three levels of difficulty in Years 8–10: the Level 1 course is the most demanding and the Level 3 course the least. All schools teaching Junior Secondary Mathematics in the NT have identified each of their courses as being at one of these levels. In addition, Year 10 End Points are identified for each of the three levels in order to ensure a base of comparability across all NT schools.*
>
> *Each student who is studying at the Year 10 level is required to maintain a* Student Assessment File *which contains each piece of work a student submits for assessment. At the end of each semester, all files at the same level in each school are ranked and a sample of these files is presented at a Regional Consensus Moderation meeting (Mathematics Year 10 Assessment Package for Northern Territory Schools, 1989, p3).*

Moderation of Year 10 Mathematics involves both consensus and visitation moderation. The Assistant Moderator visits each school offering Year 10 Mathematics, usually in Semester 1 to ensure that '...each school's Mathematics program meets Departmental requirements in terms of areas to be covered and objectives to be achieved'. The moderator also '...assesses that standard of work in one school relative to work produced in other schools. This comparison is made possible by applying a common set of criteria related to objectives, processes and work requirements' (ibid, p1).

Two consensus moderation meetings are held during the school year which are aimed at moderating teacher assessments. Towards the end of Semester 1, regional consensus meetings are held in Alice Springs and Darwin. A representative from each school, including those from towns outside these major centres, travels to the meetings. Teachers are required to bring a sample of Student Assessment Files containing all of the work students have completed up to the time of the meeting. The aim of this first consensus meeting is '...to enable teachers to gauge how their school compares with other schools, in relation to the standard of work, the types of assessment instruments used and the amount of work completed at each of the three levels'. Interim grades are allocated '...so as to give teachers and students an idea of how their achievements rate against those of students from other schools' (ibid, p4). The final consensus meeting, which is held in Darwin towards the end of Semester 2, is aimed at allocating final grades for the Student Assessment File. Teachers are required to bring a representative sample of their Student Assessment Files and a complete rank order list of all students and their tentative final grades for each of the three year levels. All files are examined and grades finalised for each student (ibid, p5).

Year 11 Mathematics

In 1990 there were nineteen accredited courses for Year 11 Mathematics. Schools choose which courses they offer. For each course there is a document which describes aims, objectives, content, references, methodology and suggested strategies for assessment. It is the responsibility of the teachers of the course to develop their own assessment instruments. The moderation process involves a visit to each school each semester by the moderator and a workshop at the end of each semester to moderate examinations produced by schools.

During the visit to each school, the moderator checks that the courses are being implemented as specified in course documents and that the assessments being made by teachers are appropriate. Criteria for moderation include: coverage of topics listed in the accredited course, the allocation of marks, degree of difficulty of the items and weighting of topics

within a course. Depending on the size of the school, some internal moderation occurs with the setting of the assessment instruments, for example it may be the responsibility of the various teachers teaching a course to develop a test or set of items for a particular part of that course. This reduces the workload on all teachers (and the moderator) and lends itself to internal moderation through discussions between teachers. The moderator examines the instruments developed by the group for each course. In other schools where the teachers teaching the course develop the assessment instruments for their own courses, internal moderation may take place if such instruments are discussed with other teachers. In the second instance, the moderator must examine the instruments that have been produced by each of the teachers teaching the Year 11 accredited courses.

Each course has an examination component and it is the responsibility of an Examination Moderation Panel to examine and approve end-of-semester examination papers which are produced by schools.

> *Schools are required to submit the examination papers approximately three weeks prior to the examination period for moderation and approval. The Panel reads each paper and comments on its standard, content balance, layout and language. If improvements are necessary they are made and relayed to schools. Teachers must incorporate any necessary changes before the examinations are administered to students (Moderation of Accredited Senior Mathematics Courses 1990, p3).*

The panel consists of the moderator and five Mathematics teachers selected from high schools and secondary colleges throughout the Territory.

Resource Implications

Any review of moderation procedures would be incomplete without some reference to resource implications. Naturally these vary according to the moderation approach which is adopted and to the mechanisms by which it is implemented.

As explained above, moderation of English and Mathematics in Years 10 and 11 in the NT is achieved through a combination of consensus meetings and visitation. In practice this means that an Assistant Moderator in each subject undertakes a program of visits to participating schools and arranges a series of consensus meetings involving teachers. The major resource implications are obvious: the salaries of two Assistant Moderators, plus on-costs, and a travel budget presently in the region of $70 000 per annum for school visits and meetings. In addition there would be certain hidden costs, such as the provision of relief teachers and the time which other office-based and schools staff devote to assisting with the moderation process. A major, less quantifiable cost, is the disruption to class learning when the regular class teacher is absent.

Extension of moderation to other subjects has also to be considered. It is the policy of the NT Board of Studies that moderation be gradually extended to other subjects in the Approved Curriculum at Year 10. Similarly, with the introduction of the new South Australian Certificate of Education, some form of moderation of Year 11 Accredited courses in other subjects will be necessary. Already, attempts are underway to trial various approaches to moderation at the Year 10 level in subjects such as Science and Social Education and a form of moderation will be used with these subjects in 1992. Since the current requirement is that such trials be conducted 'within existing resources' a number of low-cost options are being explored. Inevitably, there will be hidden costs in terms of staff time and diversion of resources, and comparisons will be drawn between those subjects where funding is available and those where it is not and there will be some pressures for greater equity.

3 OBSERVATIONAL AND INTERVIEW DATA

INTRODUCTION

Documented in this chapter is information gained from observations of the moderation process and from interviews with the Moderators and Assistant Moderators in each of the two subject areas.

Observations were made of moderation procedures for English and Mathematics at both Year 10 and Year 11 throughout the Territory. Effort was made to cover as many different regions, year levels and moderation processes as possible. Both visitation and consensus moderation were observed. Although the ideal situation would have been to observe both the English and Mathematics moderation in each school selected, this was not possible since all school visits were made by accompanying the Assistant Moderator for each subject, and the two Assistant Moderators did not often visit the same school at the same time. Thus, it was only possible in one instance to observe both subject moderations in the same school. School visits were planned to coincide with different styles of moderation under different circumstances. They were also designed to be as unobtrusive as possible under the circumstances for both the schools and the Assistant Moderators.

Structured interviews were carried out with the English Moderator and Assistant Moderator and the Mathematics Moderator and Assistant Moderator. In each subject area, both the Moderator and Assistant Moderator chose to be interviewed together and hence the answers to the questions were a joint effort. The interview data is presented in question and answer format for each of the two subject areas.

OBSERVATION REPORTS

Fourteen observations were made over a three-month period. The observations ranged from one hour to seven hours, the time period being dependent on the moderation process being observed. In the case of English, the observations involved three school visits and four meetings. In the case of Mathematics, it was six visits and one meeting. To some extent this pattern reflects the different approaches to moderation in the two subjects. The following is a description of the various moderation activities observed and reflect what was said by those participating which may not indicate a consensus view of all of those involved in moderation. The observations were made either during school visits where the Assistant Moderator carried out visitation moderation or was involved with inservice, or during consensus moderation meetings at which the Moderator and Assistant Moderator met with teachers of the subject in a region.

Observation 1

Observation 1 was of a Mathematics moderation visit by the Assistant Moderator with Years 10 and 11 classes in a government school. The observation lasted from 8.30 am to 3.00 pm and involved observation of a range of activities undertaken by the moderator while in the school.

The school serves a town with a highly mobile population, thus group work was a problem since many students came in the middle of a project and left before it was completed. Because students could not finish work individually, the interdependency of group work meant that everyone's work was affected by group members. Teachers claimed that their students were a more disparate group than in many other school communities. Year 11 and 12 students, usually the brightest, were often sent to boarding schools. This led to a large junior school and senior classes with small numbers of students in certain subject areas.

The six Mathematics teachers were given time to attend the sessions. The Assistant Moderator presented the new curriculum document, which was discussed by the group. The Assistant Moderator had prepared questions to promote discussion. New teaching material was also on display.

The main features of the inservice were the sharing of ideas through group discussions, learning new skills, the discussion on more efficient use of material available at the school, and discussing other matters of concern.

Teachers expressed concern that there was a move to hold inservices out of school hours. They claimed that with their present workload, this was unreasonable. Moreover, they stated that the new curriculum expected them to teach things they might not know or would need to revise. The group discussed different aspects of moderation and what they were hoping to achieve in Mathematics.

Assessment techniques were discussed. Teachers stated that the major problem was that students expected every piece of work to be assessed. With the introduction of new Mathematics, there was greater emphasis on individual thinking and problem solving to get the correct answer. They said that it was hard to break students from the belief that an answer is either right or wrong.

The role of student assignments was also discussed. Teachers stated that it was difficult to determine the degree of student ownership. Students could re-submit work until it was satisfactory and could obtain help from outside the school: it was important to be sure that teachers were marking students' own work. They questioned the extent to which a teacher should help students. Teachers said that they were under pressure to obtain good standards and produce completed student folios. It was suggested that weighting assignments to lessen their effect on the final grade might be a way of overcoming these problems.

Streaming in Mathematics was discussed, but it was decided that it worked against the new form of Mathematics. At the lower mathematical levels there were no talented students to lead the remaining students, thus everything was teacher directed and group work was difficult.

Observation 2

Observation 2 describes the visit of the Mathematics Assistant Moderator to a government school to assist with an inservice at Year 10 which lasted four hours. This observation is included here to demonstrate the type of work the moderator does while visiting schools.

This inservice was not run by the Assistant Moderator but by an interstate expert in the field. The Assistant Moderator took materials for the inservice and the display and made all the arrangements for the person running the inservice, which was well attended. The emphasis of the inservice was that educators show students what is valued by what is assessed. There is, therefore, a need for a very wide range of assessment items. Different methods of assessment were discussed and analysed.

Concern was expressed that '...at this stage Year 10 Mathematics is so vague that you can do almost anything'. It was thought that there was a trap in having too many common assessment tasks and that, with the Common Instruments of Assessment, teachers were beginning to teach for the tests.

Observation 3

Observation 3 was of an English Assessment and Moderation Sub-committee meeting covering Years 10 and 11 which was conducted over a three-day period. This three-day meeting for English subject seniors from schools throughout the Northern Territory was attended for part of the second day and half of the third day. The group discussed procedures for the following year, problems encountered to date and the setting of the Year 10 Common Instrument of Assessment (CIA) for 1990.

The Superintendent Curriculum addressed the meeting on the subject of moderation. The 1989 moderation process was reviewed and subject seniors from those schools offering the JSSC reported on their school's performance and any problems arising during that year, especially those relating to the Common Instruments of Assessment.

Eighteen of the nineteen schools offering the JSSC in 1989–180 category (see Table 1), declined to comment.

Table 1 Schools' views of correlation between the CIAs and moderation

Student Numbers	No. schools in this category	High correlation folio grade & CIA	Slight discrepancy folio grade & CIA	High discrepancy folio grade & CIA
4 - 30	5	2	1	2
31 - 100	8	4	2	2
101 - 180	5	2	2	1
Total	18	8	5	5

A major discussion ensued regarding Year 10 moderation. The Assistant Moderator was worried about the nature and the discrepancy of tasks being set, and stated that some students could be disadvantaged. Some teachers did not fully understand the moderation process and were unable to inform students and parents about course requirements; thus students could find their marks were lower than expected.

Many teachers believed it was important to hold meetings to discover what was happening in other schools and that the meeting of small groups of schools for folio moderation, or mini consensus was very successful. They believed that the involvement of people in moderation broadened ideas and broke down isolation. It was thought that consensus moderation was very beneficial, especially for the new teachers, or those who had not taught senior secondary courses. The group recommended that schools should be advised to send every teacher to at least one moderation exercise every year.

It was thought essential to hold an internal moderation before an external moderation, but a number of schools found that difficult and some were dissatisfied with their attempts.

Concern about the CIA was expressed. It was thought that having the CIA changed teaching styles in that some schools prepared their students for the test, while others schools made no attempt to do so. Complaints were made that the English Paper 2 encouraged teachers to teach to the exam. A representative from the Correspondence School reported having particular difficulties with the CIA, since it was not possible to prepare the students for the tests.

It was thought that the CIA disadvantaged some students. Aboriginal students did not usually handle the CIA tests well. Many, whose folio grades were in the C range, were downgraded to D, despite their diligent hard work. The tests, it was thought, disadvantaged all those with inadequate fluency in English, whether from a non-English speaking or non-literate background. Other concerns were that the tests disadvantaged students who left school at the end of Year 10 and that they advantaged the talented as opposed to the hard working.

Concern was expressed about discrepancies between folio and CIA grades. It was thought that these were most noticeable in the top and bottom range of marks in that these students received lower grades than expected. Some students who failed their folios, passed the Common Instruments of Assessment tests, which indicated that some students have the capacity to perform but did not work in class for various reasons.

In response, the Assistant Moderator said that Year 10 teachers missed out on professional development, since junior high school teachers did not get out of school often. She thought that Year 11 teachers had more professional development as they received more of the Assistant Moderator's time because of moderation at that level. She stressed the need for contact between Year 10 teachers, and thought that to extend the Year 11 moderation model to Year 10 would prove beneficial to them. However, it was stressed that this would require two moderators, one for each year level, which in the current economic climate was very unlikely.

The Moderator suggested that use could be made of school-based Moderators and Master Teachers to help with moderation. However, it was stated that the Year 11 SSABSA school-based Moderator had no time allocation for moderation and was already over worked. School-based Moderators need sufficient time to fulfil their role.

The Committee agreed unanimously that the Assistant Moderator and Moderator should be commended for implementing the mini consensus meetings, as a means of inservice, the cheapest way of inservice for the Department.

The group went on to consider moderation for 1990. A number of issues were raised concerning the practical working of moderation. It was agreed that schools would operate on a rotational basis for mini consensus meetings, which should be recorded accurately. The Assistant Moderator had distributed standardised record sheets to facilitate moderation. Only one school disputed their use, and it was agreed that those schools without their own record sheets would use the new format. It was agreed that the 1990 moderation meeting would decide the final form of a standard record sheet.

Teachers were advised that the revised booklet *Folio Requirements for JSSC*, with the ambiguities removed, was close to distribution. The group agreed on the final date for presentation of folios for 1990.

Concern was expressed for the disadvantages bilingual Aboriginal students face. Suggestions were made to implement alternative assessment procedures which gave credit for what students could do. The suggestion of an alternative English as a Second Language course was rejected on the grounds that Aboriginal parents wanted their children to do the JSSC, and the only way to empower students was to make available the same education offered to others.

The next item on the agenda was the setting of the Common Instruments of Assessment. Observers and those with a 'conflict of interest' who did not want to participate, left the meeting; the remaining participants signed either a 'paper of confidentiality', or a 'conflict of interest' declaration.

Everyone in the group had an equal opportunity to put forward ideas and to work on the test papers. The previous year's papers were discussed and agreement was reached on Paper 1 and Paper 2. It was decided to send schools all the necessary information about the questions to avoid disadvantaging those schools which did not want, or were unable, to participate in the production of the CIA tests.

Observation 4

This observation was of an English Assessment and Moderation Sub-committee meeting and the observer attended the meeting from 8.30 am to 12.00 noon. The group discussed the Year 11 moderation procedures for 1991. The school-based Moderator for SSABSA suggested that the initial consensus meeting could be smaller to save money and organised as an inservice for new teachers or those who were unsure of procedures. Those in attendance at the meeting decided not to make any changes to current consensus meetings because they considered them to be valuable as they are and necessary for the credibility of moderation.

Folio requirements for Year 10 in 1990/91 were discussed. These remained largely unchanged. The present folios accommodate different interpretations of task requirements. Since there was no set English course, schools did a variety of different things and it was thought that there was a real need to set out guidelines as to the criteria for assessing writing including poetry and drama. Many senior teachers stated that they had forgotten the guidelines and asked that the 'Blue Book', a document on teaching Year 10 English, be updated.

Observation 5

The observer accompanied the Mathematics Assistant Moderator to one of the smaller government schools outside the Darwin region to observe visitation moderation. The observation was at the Year 10 level and was for approximately two hours.

There were two Mathematics teachers at the school, one of whom was ill for the day and was replaced by a senior teacher. The moderation process, based on the visitation model, was carried out by the Assistant Moderator who looked at the teachers' Mathematics programs and assessment items. The moderation was followed by discussions with teachers.

The moderation was undertaken in the senior teacher's room. The Assistant Moderator looked at students' work and checked that what was being taught was at an appropriate level and interesting, that teaching aids and resources were available, and that assessment instruments were appropriate and varied.

The Assistant Moderator stressed the need to inform students about what happened with their work, the direction they were heading, their work requirements and how assessments were made. He was very supportive of the teachers, highlighting the good points in their work, offering advice for improvement in a positive and non-threatening manner and explaining about the most beneficial programs in some of the material already in the school. He provided information regarding inservices and contacts within other schools in an attempt to set up teacher networks for mutual support and exchange of ideas. The teacher was concerned about some areas of the curriculum. These were discussed with the Assistant Moderator who offered suggestions and gave examples of work from other schools. He also invited the teacher to trial a piece of work. This was accepted.

The senior teacher was asked for his opinion on moderation. He stated that he thought it was worth the extra work, because everyone throughout the Territory had equal standing. It provided resource information and support, in that one knew there was always someone to help with problems. He thought that moderation provided information about curriculum to those new to the NT, who were not Mathematics teachers or for whom the curriculum had not been properly inserviced, and was especially valuable for those working in smaller schools. With moderation, he believed, one knew that one had to perform to a certain standard. One could learn from seeing other people's work at a consensus meeting and know how one's own work compared.

Observation 6

Observation 6 was of the Assistant Moderator's visit to a small non-government school and ran from 1.30 to 3.00 pm. As the school found it difficult to release teachers from other duties, only three of the four Mathematics teachers in the school could attend the session which related to Year 10.

The Assistant Moderator encouraged the three teachers in their work, which was in accord with current mathematical philosophy and Board of Studies guidelines, but was slightly different from their Subject Senior's approach towards Mathematics teaching.

The Assistant Moderator explained that the moderation process required only a representative sample of student's work. He, again, stressed the need for students to be made aware of the procedures surrounding assessment and moderation.

Some time was spent discussing the teaching materials which the Assistant Moderator had brought with him and which the school had had difficulties in obtaining. The Assistant Moderator suggested that the teachers should write up some of their teaching material for use in other schools, and explained his idea of establishing a network amongst subject teachers. The group also discussed difficulties within the curriculum and was given advice as to how to deal with these.

Concern was expressed about the Common Instruments of Assessment at Year 10, which it was felt encouraged teachers to teach to the exam.

Observation 7

Observation 7 was of the Mathematics Assistant Moderator's visit to a secondary school in one of the smaller towns in the Northern Territory. The observer accompanied the Assistant Moderator and spent the whole school day, 8.30 am to 3.00 pm in the school. It was reported that the school serves an extremely transient population, with students from all over Australia as well as from the Northern Territory. The level of mobility is reflected in the high turnover of teachers in the school.

The moderation was undertaken on the second day of the Assistant Moderator's visit. The Mathematics faculty members were only able to attend in their free time. They presented their folios and programs, which included worksheets and assessments, to the Assistant Moderator individually or in small groups. This allowed teachers to discuss individual problems.

The Assistant Moderator discussed the moderation with the senior teacher, who wanted to know about the progress and standard of each class, since only a verbal report was given at that stage.

The Assistant Moderator is almost the only outside contact which these teachers have with another mathematics specialist and thus was expected to answer questions on any topic. The group discussed the suitability and amount of work required for student folios and whether the students or teacher owned these. Difficulties with teaching aspects of the curriculum were also discussed.

Teachers expressed a high level of frustration and stress, stating that they received very little help from the Department. They were angry and, in some cases, defensive about their work and said they had very little job satisfaction from the work they did.

The Assistant Moderator explained that a network of teachers was being established and an item bank of teaching materials, based on ideas of teachers participating in moderation, was being constructed.

Observation 8

On this occasion the Mathematics Assistant Moderator was accompanied on a visit to a non-government school to observe the process with both Years 10 and 11. The observation took place from 8.00 am to 12.00 noon.

Part of the staffroom was set aside for the moderation. The Assistant Moderator modified his approach because he was aware that, with other people present, teachers were ill at ease and found it very difficult to discuss their problems, although one or two did freely.

The Assistant Moderator explained that Year 10 students do not need to keep folios, but that it is obligatory in Year 11. A teacher complained that the guidelines regarding weighting of assessments in Year 10 were too vague, which could lead to students' being disadvantaged. Teachers of both years wanted inservice help with certain areas of the curriculum.

The main purposes of this visit were to discuss programs, ensure they were balanced and to offer practical help to those who required it. Since General Mathematics was usually taught by teachers without a mathematical background, it was difficult for them to write assessment items and examination papers. First year teachers asked for help, and acknowledged their shortcomings, but were positive that given time and experience they would improve.

The Assistant Moderator suggested that teachers' work should be kept in files, so that teachers could benefit from each other's work.

Observation 9

This observation was of visitation moderation of Year 11 English in a non-government school. The observation took place from 8.30 am to 12.00 noon.

The moderation related to Year 11 Language and Literature and Year 11 General English. Year 10 work is moderated only at the teacher's request, or if the school is small and the teacher has no access to other Year 10 teachers.

Teachers were not given release time to see the Assistant Moderator so this had to be fitted in with the normal teaching load. The Assistant Moderator talked with each of the teachers individually about work and problems they may have. She checked programs to ensure that they contained appropriate tasks and teaching materials, examined selected folios and wrote comments for each student whose folio was checked.

At the beginning of the year, the Assistant Moderator notified all Subject Seniors what materials were required for this first school visit. Nevertheless some teachers were uncertain as to what was expected of them and many folios lacked the specific requirements, especially the student ranking lists. These had to be completed by the Assistant Moderator, which took a considerable time. One teacher presented only the folios she thought represented the range of her students' grades, while another did not bring any, because she had not informed her class about the assistant Moderator's visit. Some teachers did not have their programs with them.

Observation 10

The English Assistant Moderator was accompanied during a one-hour visit to a government school to observe the moderation process with Year 11. The Assistant Moderator had spent two days checking Year 11 student folios and teachers' programs. At the end of each session, she informed teachers and the Subject Senior about her opinions as to whether the

teaching materials and assessment instruments were appropriate and varied and whether the requirements of moderation were met. The Assistant Moderator highlighted good points as well as commenting on those areas which needed improvement.

The teachers had been encouraged to hold an internal moderation before the final moderation occurred. They explained that this was difficult because of time constraints and the fact that people taught different units in Year 11 English. Other topics of discussion included ways to improve cover sheets and whether teachers were meeting their students' needs.

The Assistant Moderator also talked about teaching materials such as texts, films and videos that were available to teachers.

Observation 11

Observation 11 involved the English Assistant Moderator's visit to moderate Year 11 work in one of the larger government schools. The moderation process was observed for one of the four days it was in operation. Because of the size of the school, the Assistant Moderator usually spent a week there, but owing to a public holiday only four days were available.

Because there is a school-based Moderator in the school and since there had been no time for a faculty meeting at the end of the previous week, a written report was circulated to all the teachers concerned.

The folios presented included a full range of grades from both boys and girls. The Assistant Moderator suggested that an internal moderation be carried out to make the students aware of what they needed to do and also to help new teachers who might be unfamiliar with moderation.

While the observer was visiting the school, a number of teachers discussed moderation procedures. A number of teachers commented on the role of the Assistant Moderators: some thought they tried to do too much, that they should inform Subject Seniors and school administrators about faculty problems, since it was the school's responsibility to implement their advice. One teacher thought that teachers in secondary colleges did not require as much help from the Assistant Moderator as those in smaller schools who did not have access to people with knowledge and experience in the same area.

Although some thought that moderation was a useful tool, many complained about the workload since teachers in secondary colleges could teach up to four moderated courses in English. They stated that many teachers were stressed by moderation; they had a heavy teaching load and on top of this they have to get the students ready for moderation.

Some teachers complained that students did not care if they had not completed their folios on time, while one teacher thought it unfair that schools had different rules and requirements regarding folio completion, some allowing students to hand work in late, while others did not.

Folios caused several comments: it was thought that presentation took precedence over content and that teachers put in too much effort for the benefit of the Assistant Moderator, who should be prepared to sort the material herself. One thought that folios should include a contents page with the allocated grades and that the Assistant Moderator should trust that the work had been covered according to curriculum requirements.

The time spent on moderation provoked comment that too many teachers and too many meetings were involved. It was stated that the majority of teachers knew what they were doing and only needed the help of their Senior and an internal moderation. It was stated that at the end of the year one teacher, selected by the Senior and other teachers, could take a

representative sample of folios to a final moderation. One teacher believed that Year 11 moderation needed a buffer in the form of an examination in addition to class work.

Observation 12

This observation describes a regional consensus meeting to moderate a Year 11 Language and Literature course. The Assistant Moderator and four subject teachers were involved in the moderation. The teaching staff and the senior teacher had decided that all the students' folios would be looked at rather than a small representative sample, as would be the normal procedure. The process was observed for approximately four hours.

The students' folios were divided into piles according to grades given by the classroom teachers. The work was re-marked by another member of the consensus meeting. If the second marker gave the same mark as the first marker, the cover sheet with the teacher's original mark was ticked. However, if the second mark differed from the first, a third person marked the paper. If the third was the same as the second, the first mark was altered. If there was no agreement about the marks, the folio was then marked by the Assistant Moderator.

This moderation process involved a lot of interaction between members of the group. Teachers explained how they had marked their students' folios. If asked, they gave additional information about their students or, if they knew who was marking their students' work, they approached the marker to explain more about the student. For example, a student had not completed the work but would hand in the missing piece later, that a student was ill, had domestic problems, etc. Students were still handing work in for moderation while teachers were marking folios. This appeared to disadvantage students from another school, where the teacher had to bring all his students' work with him.

Observation 13

Observation 13 was of a consensus moderation meeting on the Year 11 General English Course. This involved the Assistant Moderator and four teachers. The moderation took place at a large government school. The process was observed for five hours.

The procedure followed was the same as that for Language and Literature moderation. Since one teacher taught two of the three classes of General English, other teachers had to moderate students' work even though they did not teach the subject. The subject teacher did not like this because there was insufficient discussion about the subject and therefore little opportunity to exchange new ideas and points of view.

At the end of the moderation, the group talked about the course and the work being done in individual classrooms. Teaching methods and techniques were discussed and analysed, as well as ways of implementing successful techniques. Concern was expressed about moderation in general, the main worry being what would replace moderation were it to be removed. In general, the group approved of moderation.

Observation 14

Observation 14 was of a consensus moderation meeting for Year 10 Mathematics. Teachers from various junior secondary schools looked at student folders and at the end discussed the folios. The full day, 8.00 am to 3.00 pm, was spent observing the moderation process.

Junior secondary schools, offering JSSC, sent classroom teachers to represent each of the Mathematics levels, 1 to 3. They had brought their students' work, divided into levels and grades. A check list of requirements was attached to each piece of work. The folios were

looked at by three people to see if they agreed with the grade given. There was room for comments on the check lists and moderators wrote comments regarding the folio as a whole or specific items within it. A report was written on the overall grade given by the classroom teacher. The check list was signed by two school moderators and the Assistant Moderator.

At the end of the moderation, there was a vigorous discussion between teachers and the Assistant Moderator about the folios. The group also discussed the three levels of Mathematics. This discussion was important for the teachers' professional development. They exchanged ideas, teaching materials and methodologies.

INTERVIEWS

The English Moderator and Assistant Moderator were interviewed together using the set questions that are outlined in this section. This procedure was duplicated with the Mathematics Moderator and Assistant Moderator. Each question has been included, along with a paraphrase of the combined answers.

Interview with the English Moderator and Assistant Moderator

Question 1. Is moderation in its present form sufficient to achieve comparability of student standards across the Northern Territory ?

Yes overall, but Year 10 is less satisfactory than Year 11. Year 11 courses are a semester long and more tightly defined than Year 10. Year 10 teachers are seen once a year, there is no prescribed Year 10 course and the guidelines are open for a much more liberal interpretation. All schools are encouraged to have internal moderation, but it is not compulsory.

Question 2. Are the statements contained in your subject area documents being achieved regarding moderation?

Yes, for Year 11, but only up to a point for Year 10. Year 10 English is not as defined and is likely to be interpreted by the teachers. There is not a prescribed Year 10 English course. Teachers ensure that work requirements are done but the outcomes which are expected vary from school to school.

Question 3. To what degree is moderation

a) achieving comparability of student standards;
b) achieving improvement in student standards; and
c) contributing to teachers' professional development?

a) An A in one school is of the same standard as an A in another school. Comparability of what is being taught is higher, but you cannot ensure that students in one school are as good as students in another school.

b) Year 11 and 12 standards have risen over time. This could be as a result of moderation but it is also the result of having more appropriate courses offered to students. Only one level of English is offered at Year 10 and the readiness for students to work at a Year 10 standard of English depends on their work in the previous year. However teachers are having a greater expectation of student abilities and work output because they have seen the work of other teachers from other schools and have had a chance to discuss student work.

c) Very high. All teachers comment on the professional development for themselves as a result of moderation. They can share expertise, talk over problems they are facing, get

support from their peers. It takes away some of the isolation for a number of teachers who work in smaller or isolated schools.

Question 4. Is it possible to make comparability of standards, improvement in student standards and staff development more effective than they are at present?

Yes, if more exemplars of approaches of how experienced teachers have achieved set goals, taught specific items or set out their work were made available to teachers. Also, if more opportunities were presented for teachers to meet professionally and meet teachers teaching a level above them and a level below them.

Single-sex classes can have a positive effect on students, especially on boys who are underachieving in English. Students can be grouped according to attainment of intended learning outcomes in English but they should be homogeneous by age.

In the junior high schools students get fragmented learning and constant change of teachers and peer groups. Everything changes too quickly and too often; the students feel that they don't belong anywhere.

Question 5. What do you think are the most valuable aspects of moderation in your subject area?

Comparability of expectations and and assessment criteria. Students are doing similar things and have access to the same quality of education no matter where they are. If they move to another school they will be doing similar things. Students feel that the system is much fairer because of moderation and that they have some protection from individual teachers' marking schemes.

Teachers feel far more accountable for the work they are giving their students. There are very few incompetent teachers teaching moderated courses, the quality of teachers improves.

Question 6. What are the easiest areas to moderate?

Written material is the easiest to moderate. You have the written work in front of you and can discuss it with others.

Question 7. The most difficult to moderate?

Oral and reading exercises are difficult to moderate. You have to trust what the teacher has said. It is possible to verify the grades by comparing them with the written work handed in by the student.

Question 8. Does a small school/college suffer more from interruptions caused by the moderation process than a larger school?

Small schools say that they have difficulty during moderation, especially the administrative staff. In smaller schools a number of teachers teach across subject areas and they are difficult to replace. Supply teachers are not available in some smaller towns even though the money is. Teachers who travel to moderation from smaller areas may require two days absence because of the availability of flights, even though they are only required for one day at moderation.

Question 9. Do you think that you have sufficient time to carry out your work in moderation?

No! Two Assistant Moderators are required to carry out the job satisfactorily. At the moment Year 11 gets the bulk of the Assistant Moderator's time because of the nature of the model, while Year 10 misses out.

Question 10. Are there times during the year when your job puts extra pressure on you?

There are three peaks per semester, at the beginning, during the middle and towards the end. There is not much of a break in between, since courses have to be written and resource material prepared. Schools outside of Darwin require more time because they do not have a moderator easily available to them. The Assistant Moderator, in many instances, has to work with the teachers in the evenings in the role of an adviser, because there is no time during school hours for this kind of work.

Question 11. Would you consider the present resources allocated to moderation to be adequate?

English is well resourced materially but it requires an extra Assistant Moderator to cope with the workload. More money is needed to get teachers together so they can discuss issues and work out solutions.

The system could be adapted by having a Central Moderator assisted by school group moderators. Some allowance for teachers acting as school-based moderators regarding time allocation is required for these people to be able to carry out their jobs properly.

Question 12. Given the present levels of funding, what areas are the most difficult to operate?

Group consensus meetings are the most difficult to operate because there is not enough money to have every teacher participate. Usually the least experienced teachers are placed in smaller towns and there is usually a high turnover of staff in these schools, it is important that these people can attend and learn from their more experienced peers.

Question 13. If more money was available for moderation what areas would you spend it on?

The areas mentioned in the previous question. The Assistant Moderator should be employed at an SEO level because of the high demands and skills that the job requires.

Question 14. As far as you are aware which areas of moderation process worry the teachers the most during the year?

Teachers find that getting the folios from their students is very difficult and frustrating. The submission of the folios for moderation is threatening for some teachers. They feel that the student folios are a direct reflection on them. Year 10 teachers feel this more than Year 11, even though Year 11 teachers have more work to do for moderation. A lot of teachers have only taught in junior high schools and don't have experience with moderation at any other level.

In Year 10, some teachers only teach one unit of English on a unitised timetable and do not understand the requirements of the folio. Trying to get a completed folio of work for their students can at times be problematic.

Question 15. Which areas of the moderation process worry you the most during the year?

The Moderator is worried about the heavy workload for, and pressure on, the Assistant Moderator. The pressure on the classroom teachers is also a worry. There are difficulties in juggling the calendar to fit all the travel for everyone and finding the time to carry out what was set.

The Assistant Moderator has the biggest difficulty in finding time to do everything that needs doing.

Question 16. Does the ownership of student work pose a problem for moderation?

This is always an issue rather than a problem. Prose under supervision is a measure to get to terms with the issue; there is a reliance on teachers to be observant about student work.

Question 17. How sure are you that the assignment work handed in by students for moderation is their own work?

One can be reasonably sure that the work handed in is a student's own work. Students are required to hand in all draft work on the pieces of work handed in for moderation. There are lots of checks along the way to ensure that the work handed in is within the student's capabilities.

Question 18. Are you aware of any other moderation models in other subject areas which you believe:

a) are efficient?
b) are inefficient?
c) would work well in your subject area?

The moderation model used for Mathematics would not be appropriate for English. The Social Education independent research report which is a common assessment task is one which would be worth considering. Moderation in some SSABSA subjects is useless because they do not have common understanding of course content, process and means of assessment.

Question 19. What year level of secondary schooling is the most appropriate for external moderation to be introduced?

For certification purposes, Year 10 is alright to have moderation.

Question 20. If the moderation process is extended to other subject areas can you offer any suggestions as to the process which could be used?

To introduce moderation into any subject area you need to trial it on a small group first. You need to start with something that is most common and central to your subject area. A lot of contact with teachers is required. Get ideas from the teachers and let them have some say in the process. They need to feel the ownership of the process.

Question 21. Can you see value in keeping a number of selected student folios as exemplars for future reference and research to see if moderation can, or has, raised student performance over time?

To a small extent some folios are being kept already, but not on any systematic basis. You need to get permission from the students to keep or photocopy their folios. It would be a good idea to select student folios and keep them over time for future reference.

Interview with the Mathematics Moderator and Assistant Moderator

Question 1. Is moderation in its present form sufficient to achieve comparability of student standards across the Northern Territory ?

Moderation is a fair way of achieving comparability and student standards can be compared to a certain point, but to what degree of accuracy comparability can be achieved is another matter.

Question 2. Are the statements contained in your subject area documents being achieved regarding moderation?

The Year 11 Document is is achieving its aims because of the amount of inservice that took place this year. The Year 10 Document is still in the process of being written, but the current aims of moderation are being achieved.

Question 3. To what degree is moderation

a) achieving comparability of student standards;
b) achieving improvement in student standards; and
c) contributing to teachers' professional development?

Moderation is helping to achieve comparability of student standards. The standard of student work is better in general than in previous years, though there is no data to back it up. Teachers have benefited through moderation in terms of having an opportunity to exchange ideas and good teaching techniques. Overall, the teachers are producing better and more varied assessment items and better sequenced teacher programs.

Question 4. Is it possible to make comparability of standards, improvement in student standards and staff development more effective than they are at present?

Funding for moderation should not rely on external pressure but should be fixed so that forward planning could take place without the risk of losing the funding necessary to carry out the existing model. The present Year 11 moderation model is working well, with a greater emphasis on Consensus Moderation the model could become more beneficial to all concerned.

Question 5. What do you think are the most valuable aspects of moderation in your subject area?

It allows teachers to share ideas and materials and compare standards. Moderation has achieved the formation of a network of teachers across the Territory that share common concerns and ideas in a cooperative mutually satisfying way. It also motivates teachers to achieve higher standards and gives instant feedback on how a student, teachers and school are going. It is a non-threatening change mechanism.

Question 6. What are the easiest areas to moderate?

The top and bottom grades are the easiest to moderate, the most difficult are the middle grades. Well organised files with a good cover sheet and teacher's comments make for easier moderation.

Question 7. The most difficult to moderate?

The lack of evidence of student ownership of the work makes it difficult to moderate. Talking and discussing student work with the teachers helps to overcome this difficulty.

Question 8. Does a small school/college suffer more from interruptions caused by the moderation process than a larger school?

Small schools, especially if they are isolated are disturbed more by moderation. However, they are the ones that benefit the most because they receive exposure to other teachers and other ideas.

Question 9. Do you think that you have sufficient time to carry out your work in moderation?

An Assistant Moderator's job requires a lot of preparation prior to schools commencing at the beginning of the year. A new Assistant Moderator should overlap with the outgoing one for at least two weeks in order to gain some practical knowledge about the job.

Question 10. Are there times during the year when your job puts extra pressure on you?

The moderation process has busy times during the year and then both the Moderator and the Assistant Moderator are under pressure. The Assistant Moderator is under pressure for the whole of the year in that visits to schools have to be made and this involves a lot of travel throughout the Northern Territory as well as constantly being exposed to new people.

Question 11. Would you consider the present resources allocated to moderation to be adequate?

The present resources allocated for 1991 are hopelessly inadequate. Teachers in schools are expecting the same moderation procedures in 1991 as they had in 1990. If standards are to improve, guaranteed funding over a period of time is required.

Question 12. Given the present levels of funding, what areas are the most difficult to operate?

In 1991, Years 10 and 11 models of moderation as they had been developed over the past few years will not be able to operate. The teachers are expecting the same models to operate in 1991.

Question 13. If more money was available for moderation what areas would you spend it on?

Helping teachers design more efficient assessment items and programs would be beneficial for all.

Question 14. As far as you are aware which areas of moderation process worry the teachers the most during the year?

An individual teacher should not be teaching too many moderated subjects. In Mathematics, anything over two moderated subjects puts pressure on the teacher.

Question 15. Which areas of the moderation process worry you the most during the year?

The moderation process itself does not pose a worry, but individual situations that crop up from time to time are a worry and add pressure to the job. A worry is that the Assistant Moderator is not involved with the setting of the Common Instruments of Assessment so that at a later stage proper feedback to the schools could occur and also feedback from the schools to the people designing the Common Instruments of Assessment. The communication between various parties in setting up the Common Instruments of Assessment would also broaden the assessment items away from the standard skill type, pen and paper questions.

Question 16. Does the ownership of student work pose a problem for moderation?

The ownership of student work is a problem which is being overcome by school visits, discussions with teachers and the broadening of assessment instruments.

Question 17. How sure are you that the assignment work handed in by students for moderation is their own work?

One cannot be entirely sure that the work handed in by the students is their own work, but this is not seen as a major problem. Assignments carry significantly less weight than other assessment items.

Question 18. Are you aware of any other moderation models in other subject areas which you believe:

a) are efficient?
b) are inefficient?
c) would work well in your subject area?

There are a number of different moderation models in other states and the Mathematics model had taken ideas from various models around the country and improved upon them.

Question 19. What year level of secondary schooling is the most appropriate for external moderation to be introduced?

Introduction of moderation at Year 10 is fine; it has an influence on the rest of the school.

Question 20. If the moderation process is extended to other subject areas can you offer any suggestions as to the process which could be used?

Each subject area should make decisions for itself regarding what moderation procedures to introduce, though the consensus model is very useful.

Question 21. Can you see value in keeping a number of selected student folios as exemplars for future reference and research to see if moderation can, or has, raised student performance over time?

It is a good idea to keep student folios; usually the better students want their folios back. Year 10 folios would be easier to keep because they contain only a small selection of work. Schools should be encouraged to keep some student folios.

SUMMARY

Observation of Visits and Meetings

On the basis of these observations it appears that the work of the Assistant Moderators in English and Mathematics have many similarities. Both moderators spent a high proportion of their time working with teachers either in small groups or individually. During such contact time the most common activities were:

examining samples of student work and agreeing on standards

discussing assessment options and appropriate strategies

clarifying folio requirements.

Other areas which received considerable attention were teaching techniques and materials, curriculum issues, teaching programs and specific moderation procedures. Overall, it was apparent that Assistant Moderators are expected to fill a wide-ranging advisory role in their work with teachers and schools, in addition to their moderation duties.

Interviews with Moderators and Assistant Moderators

The moderators for both subjects were in general agreement that:

moderation has improved comparability of standards

levels of achievement have risen

teachers have benefited from the inservice component of moderation, particularly the group consensus meetings

both students and teachers benefit from the common standards and expectations

small schools may find moderation procedures disruptive, but may benefit most

moderators are under considerable pressure at peak times

resource limitations affect moderation procedures, particularly funding for travel

the ownership of student work is not a major problem

Year 10 is suitable for the introduction of external moderation

retaining some folios for future reference would be worthwhile.

In some areas the views of the moderators in the two subjects were somewhat different as shown below:

the workload in English was thought to justify an additional Assistant Moderator

in Mathematics the major worry for teachers was seen as the overall workload, whereas in English it was the preparation of folios

any extension of moderation should involve teachers and small groups trialling according to the English moderators, while the Mathematics moderators would emphasise a subject-specific approach and the value of the consensus model.

4 VIEWS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

INTRODUCTION

Questionnaires were sent to all schools in the Northern Territory with Year 10 and/or Year 11 students. Larger schools received three or four questionnaires while the smaller schools received only one. Approximately sixty-five questionnaires were sent out. Schools were asked to have administrators most closely involved with Year 10 and/or Year 11 Mathematics and/or English fill in the questionnaire. A total of thirty-two questionnaires (approximately 50% of those sent) representing all regions of the Territory were returned. Of these, fourteen were from junior high schools (Years 8–10), nine from high schools (Years 8–12), eight from secondary colleges (Years 11–12) and one from a school described as an area school T–12. Twenty-four questionnaires were from government schools and three from non-government schools. Five participants chose not to answer the question on whether their school was government or non-government.

The aim of this questionnaire was to get school administrators' views on the moderation process. The questionnaire covered topics such as: the degree of understanding of the moderation process by administrators and teachers; administrative procedures for inservicing new staff; whether the process is explained to parents; the value of moderation to students and teachers; administrative problems associated with moderation; whether moderation causes stress to administrators, teachers and students; the timing of moderation; whether moderation should be extended to other subjects; and the year level at which moderation should begin.

FINDINGS

Questions 1 and 2

Questions 1 and 2 asked if administrators felt they had a good understanding of the moderation process in English and/or Mathematics at Year 10 and/or Year 11 and whether they believed teachers in their school have a good understanding of the process.

Of the twenty-five administrators from schools which had Year 10 classes, 84% felt they had a good understanding of the process in English at Year 10 and 96% felt they had a good understanding of the process in Mathematics. Of the seventeen administrators answering questions concerning their understanding of moderation at Year 11, 77% felt they had a good understanding in English and 88% felt they had a good understanding in Mathematics. All of the administrators who returned questionnaires felt that teachers in their schools who are directly involved in moderation have a good understanding of the moderation process. Tables 2 and 3 provide a summary of this information.

Table 2 Whether administrators have a good understanding of moderation

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	21 (84%)	4 (16%)	25	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	15
Maths	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	25	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	17

Table 3 Whether teachers have a good understanding of moderation

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	21 (100%)	0 (0%)	21	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	15
Maths	25 (100%)	0 (0%)	25	17 (100%)	0 (0%)	17

Question 3

Question 3 asked whether provisions were made in the schools to teach new staff about the moderation process. All administrators except two in English at Year 10, one in Mathematics at Year 10, and one each in English and Mathematics at Year 11 felt that adequate provisions were made to inservice new staff. Of the thirty comments offered on this topic, all stated that there was some form of faculty inservice provided either formally or informally for new staff. Table 4 summarises this information.

Table 4 Whether inservice on moderation is provided for new staff

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	21 (91%)	2 (9%)	23	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	15
Maths	23 (96%)	1 (4%)	24	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	16

As the comments were very similar, only three have been included to demonstrate administrators' views on this topic:

> *General information is given by Principals and Assistant Principal's introduction. More specific details are provided in the 'Teacher Handbook' and the 'College Prospectus'. Teachers receive ongoing inservice from faculty seniors.*
>
> *Internal inservice by senior teacher to those involved in the courses.*
>
> *Attendance at all initial consensus moderation meetings is obligatory for new teachers. Lots of support is also offered on an informal basis.*

Question 4

Question 4 asked whether the school or college had explained the moderation process to parents. Of the administrators who answered this question with regard to Year 10 English, 73% said the process had been explained to parents while 67% said Mathematics moderation had been explained. Of the sixteen administrators who answered the question concerning Year 11 English, 88% said that the process had been explained to parents and for Mathematics 76% said the process had been explained to parents. The majority of comments indicated that parents were informed at parent information evenings, parent–teacher interviews and through newsletters and handbooks. A sample of comments follows Table 5.

Table 5 Whether the moderation process has been explained to parents

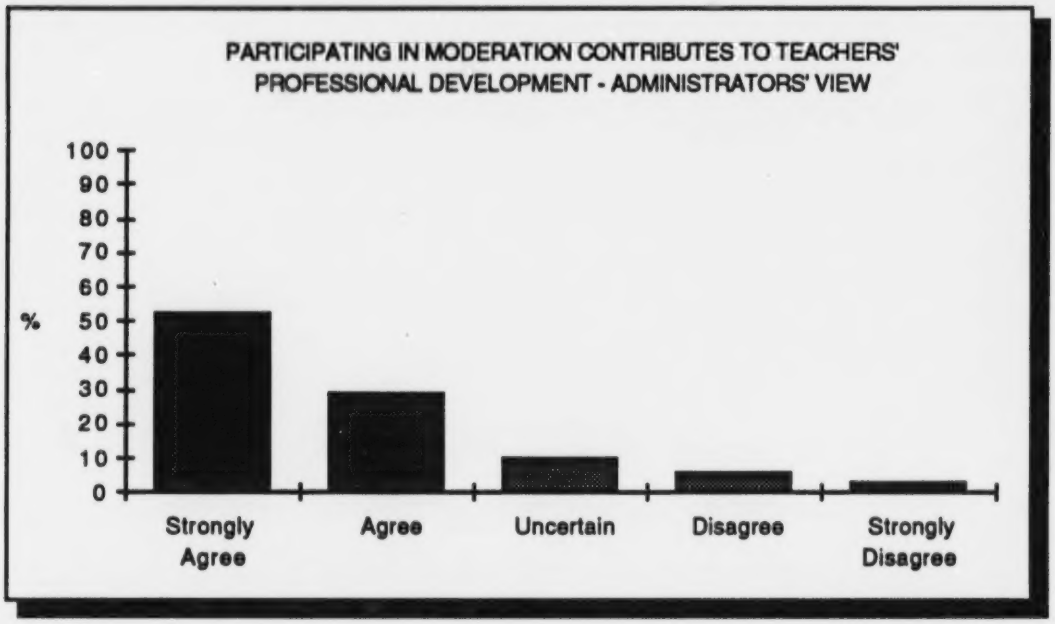
SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	16 (73%)	6 (27%)	22	14 (88%)	2 (12%)	16
Maths	16 (67%)	8 (33%)	24	13 (76%)	4 (24%)	17

> *Moderation is explained at the parent meeting at the beginning of the year and the process is explained to parents when teachers counsel students on subject choice.*
>
> *Yes, but probably not enough. The moderation process could be briefly explained through the school prospectus which outlines courses.*
>
> *Spoke to parents at general school information night and to the school council to make them aware of continuous assessment.*

Question 5

Question 5 asked if administrators felt that participation in moderation contributed to teachers' professional development. They were asked to provide an answer on a five-point scale which ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' and then to make comments. Of the thirty-one administrators who answered, 52% strongly agreed, 29% said they agreed, 10% were uncertain, 6% disagreed that moderation contributed to teachers' professional development and 3% strongly disagreed. Graph 1 provides a graphic representation of this data.

Graph 1 Does participating in moderation contribute to teachers' professional development?



There was a wide range of comments provided, with the majority giving reasons for agreement and hence most of the following comments are from those who agreed. The main reasons for agreement were that moderation ensures standards are maintained, forces teachers to program to the syllabus, and allows for interaction with other teachers. A sample of the comments from those who were uncertain as to whether engaging in the moderation exercise contributed to teachers' professional development, or were in disagreement are also included. The following is a sample of comments from those administrators who were in agreement that the moderation process contributes to teachers' professional development:

> *Teachers have ownership of the system. They learn about the process. It is the best way to assess student progress over the year/s.*
>
> *Leads to more uniformity, cooperation and sharing of ideas.*
>
> *For teachers it is very informative and helpful.*
>
> *Teachers get a realistic view of student capabilities. The process provides moral support from peers.*
>
> *It offers a valid and serious forum for teachers to exchange ideas and concepts and makes teachers as accountable as their students.*

Contributes strongly to accountability and leads to good planning and analysis of curriculum documents with a view to meeting aims and objectives and assessment criteria. It promotes an exchange of ideas from other schools/teachers directly involved and through moderators. Promotes meaningful exchange between students and teachers.

It ensures that standards are maintained. Teachers understand clearly what curriculum demands are and can mark student's work at the appropriate level.

Interaction with other teachers in the area, and being introduced to current thinking in the curriculum area is most helpful.

Any provision for staff to work together looking at the process and output of education has value.

Requires programs to be written (often not done in unmoderated subjects). It enables exchange of ideas. It demands teachers follow specific assessment procedures. It enables teachers from other schools to discuss common problems.

Allows comparison across schools of marking expectations and interpretation of curriculum.

Ensures time lines and standards are met as well as ensuring minimal coverage of material.

Typical comments from those who disagreed were:

Considering teachers generally feel they have been consulted very little regarding this task, it can hardly be said to contribute to professional development.

Too much is currently required for meetings. These can be very productive for the teachers involved but cause disruption to teaching programs.

The process is predominantly one of checking on teachers. Little support seems to emanate from the system. Staff feel threatened by the process rather than feeling it is a professional development process. Also they resent the constraints and directions imposed upon their teaching without consultation. Many say they prefer the external exam system.

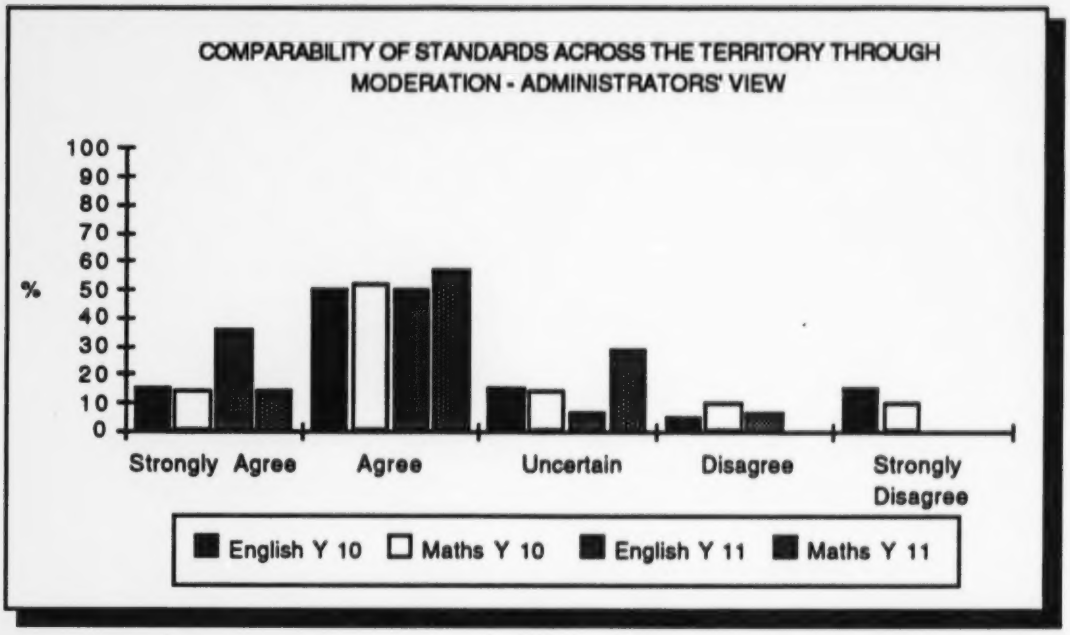
Question 6

Question 6 asked administrators whether they felt the moderation process is achieving comparability of standards across the Territory. They were asked to provide answers on a five-point scale, as for Question 5 for Mathematics and English at Year 10 and Year 11 levels. They also had the opportunity to make comments or provide reasons for their choice of answers. Graph 2 shows a summary of the information and comments follow the Graph.

Of the twenty who answered the question concerning Year 10 English, 65% were in agreement that the moderation process is successful in achieving comparability of standards across the Territory, 15% were uncertain, and 20% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. Of the twenty-one who answered the question regarding Year 10 Mathematics numbers were similar with 66% 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing', 15% uncertain, and 19% 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing'.

For Year 11 English, fourteen administrators answered this question. Eighty-six per cent 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 7% were 'uncertain' and 7% 'disagreed'. Of the fourteen who answered the question on Year 11 Mathematics, 71% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', and 29% were 'uncertain'. None 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that moderation was achieving comparability of standards at Year 11 in Mathematics.

Graph 2 Whether moderation is achieving comparable standards across the Territory



Eighteen of the thirty-two administrators provided a comment for Question 6. A sample of these comments is provided below:

There is no other reliable method. Moderation provides a realistic assessment of students' work, the exam merely tests one aspect. Moderation by consensus assists teachers in that they become aware of what is needed to be taught better, to be emphasised and developed.

Moderation requires specific objectives and methodologies to be met and used respectively. Moderators have a very clear idea of what is required.

The moderation process is successful when associated with external assessment tasks, it is insufficient in itself.

It helps but there will always be difficulties in comparing schools.

Yes, if the moderation process is carried out correctly.

When there are many variables, moderation can only give a rough indication. Comparability can only be achieved if there are common assessment instruments, the elements of which are clearly defined including the marking scheme.

The introduction of exams in Year 10 makes moderation a waste of a lot of time.

After being frustrated last year when I had to moderate the Year 10 English work I say no. Work done in some schools is below standard and should not even be

presented at moderation. It is not fair to subject conscientious staff from some schools to the garbage done in others.

Although not specifically asked for, three of the comments compared the processes in English and Mathematics moderation:

Moderation in English is more exacting than in Maths.

The English process is extensive and thorough. The Maths does not seem so rigorous.

Similar standard work receives similar marks. Mathematics moderation could concentrate more on teachers' evaluation process than individual student folios.

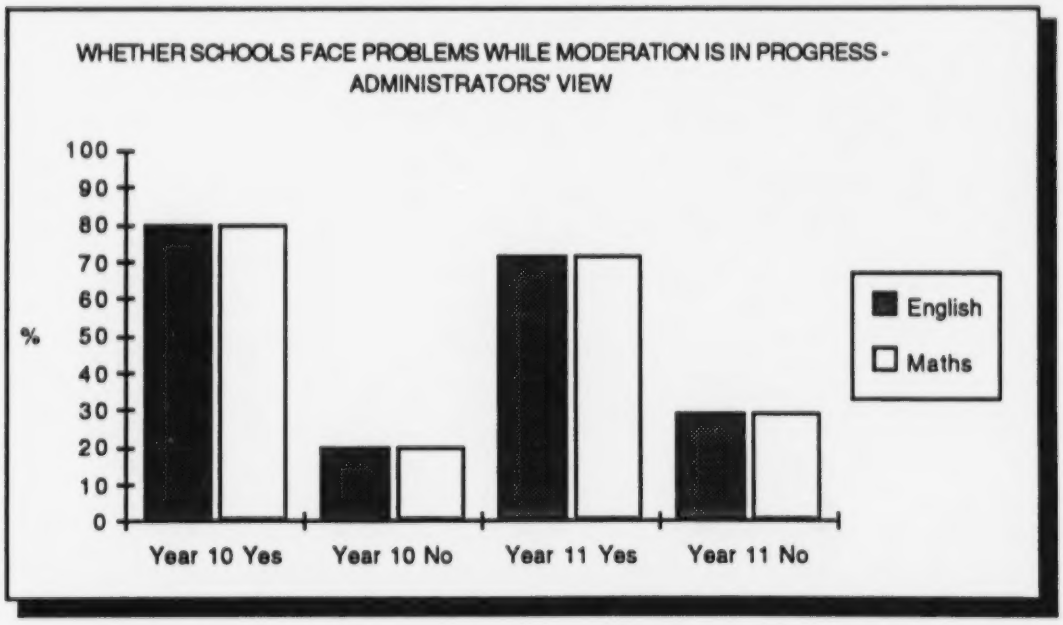
One administrator took the opportunity to praise the moderators.

With moderators of the excellent quality we have in English and Maths, this is guaranteed. They bring an excellent overview and perspective and are able to provide an intelligent appraisal of standards.

Question 7

Question 7 asked whether schools faced any problems when moderation is in progress. Of the twenty-five administrators who answered this question in regard to Year 10, 80% said their schools did encounter problems and 71% of the fourteen administrators who answered the question in regard to Year 11 said their schools faced problems when moderation is in progress. The major problems, which are reflected in the comments which follow Graph 3, revolve around the fact that in most cases the majority of faculty members are out of the school during moderation resulting in problems with class supervision and getting relief teachers. Of the twenty-six comments provided half these mentioned finding relief teachers as a problem. Many felt that the time taken for moderation is excessive.

Graph 3 Whether schools face problems while moderation is in progress



The following is a random sample of comments in answer to the question 'Does your school face any kind of problem when moderation is in progress?':

Most of the English faculty is involved in moderation and supervision of their existing classes during consensus meetings is a problem.

Staff absent from their classes places strain on faculties. It is difficult to get relief teachers.

Difficult to find suitable relief teachers, teachers prefer to teach their own classes. Suitable venue in college a problem.

Access to large relief pool a problem. Time out of school by a large number of staff at the one time.

The number of teachers out of school at the one time means that some classes can't be fully supervised.

Loss of teacher–student teaching time. Finding appropriate relief teachers. All teachers out at the same time.

Relief teachers. Takes a lot from inservice allowance.

Classes have to be covered by others. Seniors are out of the school. Other subjects suffer while students finalise folios.

Relief teachers are very hard to come by in (an isolated centre).

Too many staff absent at crucial periods.

Time taken to moderate is a problem.

Moderation takes too long – up to three days.

Time taken is a drain on teachers. Hard to find relief teachers.

Too many meetings often involving the whole faculty.

Some comments indicated that organisation for moderation did not cause problems. The following comments are examples of this:

Staff have to have relief but it is not a problem.

Administrative systems are in place to cope with the enormous number of moderation meetings that occur throughout the year. i.e. relief teachers organised, space available for moderation meetings etc.

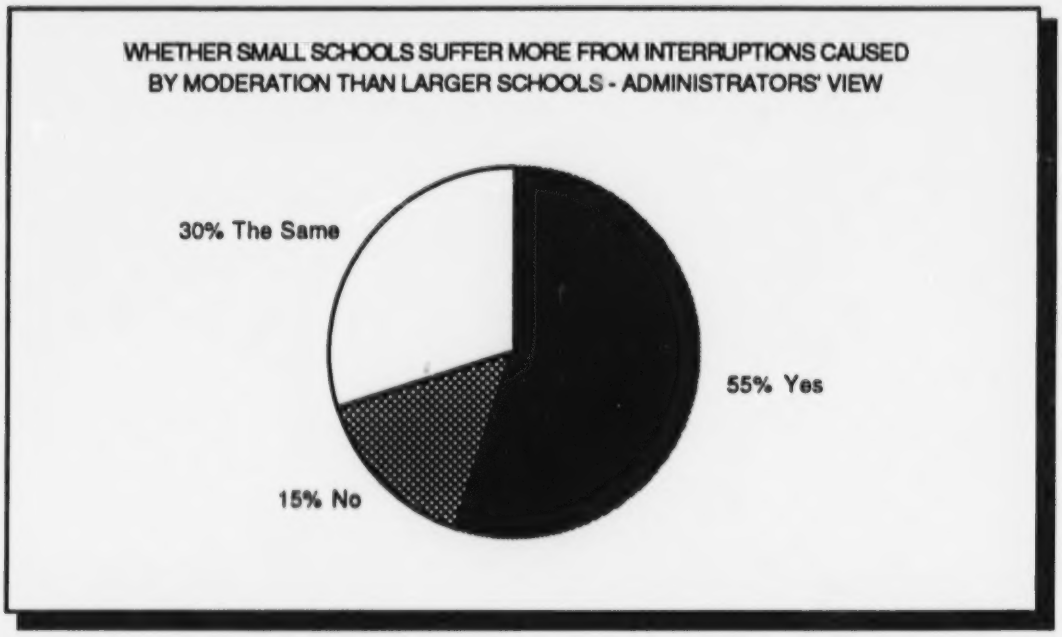
Numbers involved in the moderation process are too small to cause a problem to the whole school.

Questions 8 and 10

Question 8 asked administrators whether they felt a small school or college suffered more from interruptions caused by the moderation than large schools. Fifty-six per cent of the twenty-seven administrators who answered this question thought that small schools did suffer from disruptions more than larger schools, 30% said they thought disruptions caused

the same amount of suffering, and 15% said smaller schools did not suffer more than larger schools. Graph 4 shows illustrates this point.

Graph 4 Whether small schools suffer more than large schools from moderation processes


WHETHER SMALL SCHOOLS SUFFER MORE FROM INTERRUPTIONS CAUSED BY MODERATION THAN LARGER SCHOOLS - ADMINISTRATORS' VIEW
30% The Same
55% Yes
15% No

The following comments are a sample of the reasons administrators gave for their choice of answers and some possible solutions to lessen the problems in smaller schools. Nineteen administrators did not make any comment, perhaps because they had not had experience with moderation in small schools or because they had answered that small schools did not suffer more than larger schools or suffered the same from interruptions caused by moderation:

We don't have the staff free to help with extra supervision of classes when key personnel are away. Our teachers are involved in a variety of subjects and the workload for English/Maths affects the efforts they put into other subjects.

When teachers have more than one year level they are out of the class more often.

Small schools have less access to replacement staff. At the same time the process is even more essential to them.

Maths faculty of three and English faculty of three make up half the staff and they can all be out of the school at the one time.

Difficult to cover classes and allow adequate time for the moderation process.

The impact of teacher absence can be absorbed in a larger school.

Staff under pressure no matter the size of the school.

Sympathy towards moderation by school administrators contributes towards its smooth running in a small or large school.

Many disruptions do occur but these are counterbalanced by the value of the process to teachers and students.

Some of the solutions to lessen the problems encountered in smaller schools included:

Reduce paper work. Reduce the number of meetings. Schedule smaller group meetings out of teaching time.

Less consensus meetings, more moderator visits.

When one teacher teaches several subjects they are out of class for long periods due to moderation. Harder to get suitable relief teachers – solution – have moderator visit and bring a range of graded folios.

As question 10 asked administrators which aspects of moderation caused them the most problems and answers provided were along the same vein as for Question 8, a summary of data for Question 10 is provided here. The answers varied greatly, however, most answers fell into general categories such as; disruptions to classes because teachers are out of the school, staff replacement, and paperwork. Seventy-one per cent of the twenty-eight administrators who answered this question said that moderation caused some problems, which would indicate moderation is a cause of concern for administrators. Twenty-nine per cent of the administrators said there were no problems.

The following sample of comments demonstrates administrators' concern that moderation causes problems in their school because staff are either absent from their classes or absent from the school:

Disruptions through meetings. The fact that assessment seems to be driving the curriculum, rather than actual teaching and learning.

Disruption to regular programs, students more unsettled with relief staff

The need for seniors/teachers to be out of the school, absent from classes.

Staff replacement. Disjointed programs due to teacher absence

Staff absences – effect on students.

As with Question 8, finding suitable relief teachers and/or organising current staff to cover classes is of major concern, as is demonstrated by the following comments:

Staff release time – finding large numbers of relief teachers can be a problem.

Finding teachers to cover classes. Work overload at the time of moderation causes stress.

The amount of time involved. Getting relief teachers.

Sometimes it is hard to get the required number of relief teachers because all schools undergoing moderation require relief teachers on the same day.

Comments relating to the amount of paperwork involved with the moderation process included:

The English folios. Staff want classes of all Year 10 which is not consistent with our policy. Students working at a slower pace have less opportunity to

produce a good folio. Term 3 becomes devoted to folios and exams at the expense of education.

Paperwork – collecting assignments etc from students who are not interested. Some students spend hours on projects while others do the minimum.

Letter writing and organising visits is time consuming.

Other comments on different aspects of moderation which cause problems were:

No allowance made for English as a second language students e.g. Aboriginal.

Rank ordering 250 Year 10 students when eventually they become A, B, C, D, or E.

The process to be followed if staff persistently perform poorly in moderation.

Everything.

Question 9

Question 9 asked administrators to provide information on the aspects of moderation which they found most beneficial to themselves, their staff and their students. Only 60% of the thirty-two administrators chose to answer the question concerning benefits to themselves. Seventy-five per cent provided comments on benefits to their staff and their students. Answers varied, but some common aspects have been extracted for each of the groups – administrators, teachers, and students.

Of the nineteen comments on benefits of moderation to themselves as administrators, 84% of the answers focused on professional development, confirmation of standards of student achievement, and feedback to the school. Sixteen per cent of the comments indicated there were no benefits from moderation. The following comments are a sample of those made by administrators concerning the benefits they see from moderation for themselves:

Knowing that our school has achieved well, and that the 'superhuman efforts' of staff have been acknowledged.

Contact with highly professional moderators.

Confirms progress of students as rated by local staff.

Moderation visits ensure that courses are appropriate in both content and method and of the highest quality possible.

Good professional discussion re teaching and assessment.

Keeps me informed of standards, makes me check that work is okay and syllabuses are being followed.

Provides a statement of performance of students and staff. Provides an awareness of standards, the benefits of which lead to better teaching which lead to better classes and harmony within the college.

Feedback regarding competence of our staff and students.

Comments provided by administrators concerning the benefits they saw for teachers from the moderation process focused on professional development, allowing teachers to see and achieve standards, and accountability. The following is a sample of the comments on this topic:

Exchange ideas. Get new knowledge and skills.

Accountability – the necessity to perform to a certain standard, sharing of ideas and bringing staff together.

Reinforces marking procedures or provides advice to follow.

Taking staff beyond and out of their classrooms.

Keeps standards and allows inservice.

Interaction with staff from other schools.

Professional standing and feedback. Confidence in teaching style, provides ideas for next time.

Closer relations with colleagues.

Staff and therefore students have a clearer view of required end points. This assists with student progress and application.

Two of the administrators stated that there were no benefits, only 'relief when it is over'.

With regard to benefits from moderation for students, the majority of comments revolved around establishing standards and motivating students to perform. All but two of the comments saw moderation as being positive for students. The following comments are a sample of those provided by administrators on this topic:

It provides a sense of achievement, but the underlying stress and frustration needs to be addressed.

Moderation sets standards. Students must meet requirements therefore are not disadvantaged.

Provides classtime evaluation. The internal moderation process builds in students a sense of purpose, organisation and ownership.

Students gain a realistic impression of their ability.

Excellent motivation for them, they put more effort into their work.

They know that what is awarded to them is valid and know there is no favouritism. They know where and how to improve. They gain from teacher gains.

They gain a knowledge of their position relative to all other students.

Moderation promotes the preparation of a folio of work which can be kept.

Accomplishing a major feat. Producing their best. Acknowledgment for work for which they are totally responsible.

Forced to meet deadlines.

Students know standards and therefore aim higher. It is good if moderators speak with students.

Staff and therefore students have a clearer view of required end points. This assists with student progress and application.

Two of the comments indicated that there were no benefits to the student:

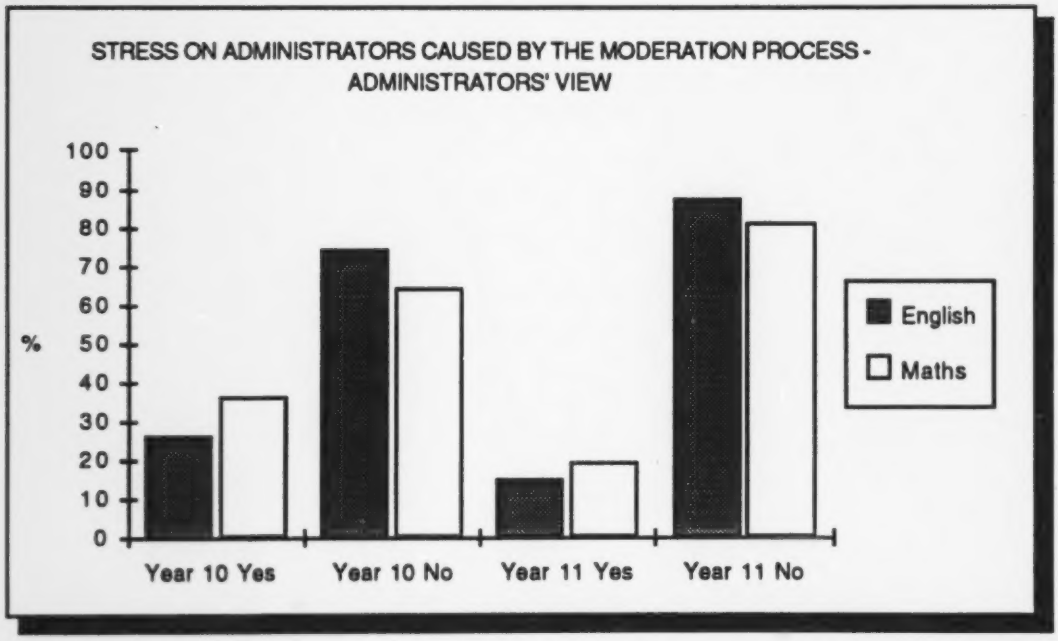
Moderation creates an extra workload without really homing in on the problems of 'learning Maths'.

There is little direct benefit.

Questions 11, 12 and 13

Questions 11, 12 and 13 asked administrators whether the moderation process places undue stress on themselves as administrators, on teachers in their school, and on students. Generally, the outcome of this question is that the majority of administrators felt that they themselves did not face undue stress due to the moderation process, and that most of their students were not unduly stressed, but that the moderation process caused undue stress on the majority of teachers. Graphs 5, 6 and 7 show the undue stress levels for the three groups as perceived by administrators, and Graph 8 provides a graphic comparison amongst the three groups.

Graph 5 Whether administrators felt moderation causes undue stress on themselves



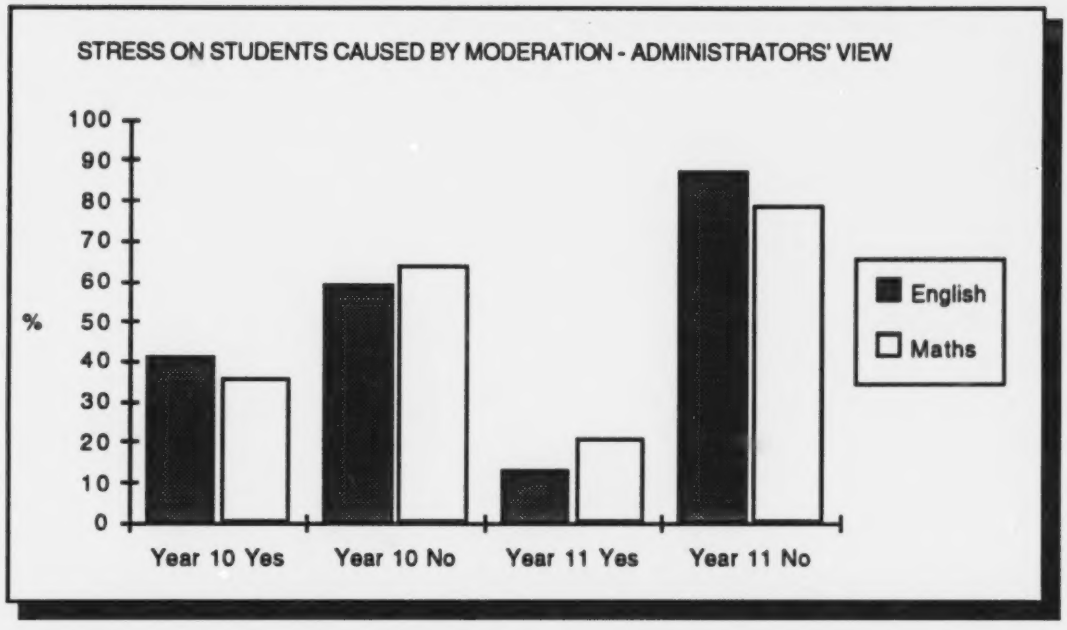
As can be seen from Graph 5, 74% of the twenty-four administrators who answered the question concerning Year 10 English said moderation did not cause undue stress on themselves. With Mathematics, 64% said the moderation process did not cause them undue stress. At Year 11, 87% of the seventeen administrators who answered the question said that moderation did not cause them undue stress in regard to English. For Mathematics the number was similar with 81% saying moderation did not cause undue stress. There were

only six comments from administrators explaining why they felt moderation caused them undue stress. The following is a sample of these:

> *Mixture of things such as time consuming, perceived value, paperwork, absence from workplace, absence from family, trying to justify the process across the board, reservations of the overall effectiveness of the process.*
>
> *Very high level of extra administration and time required.*
>
> *Moderators' visits are a cause of discontent amongst teachers.*

Of the administrators who answered the question regarding moderation causing undue stress on Year 10 students 59% thought that the process did not cause undue stress for students doing Year 10 English and 64% felt that the process did not cause undue stress to those students doing Year 10 Mathematics. For Year 11, 86% of the administrators who answered the question felt that the moderation process did not cause undue stress for those doing English and 79% said the process did not cause undue stress to those students doing Year 11 Mathematics. Graph 6 provides a pictorial representation of this information.

Graph 6 Whether administrators felt moderation causes undue stress on students



The following comments are a sample of those given on this topic:

> *Places considerable stress on top level achieving students. Poor attitude in general type student not affected.*
>
> *Lots of students don't like having to meet deadlines imposed by moderation.*
>
> *Teacher demands for completed folios may not be the best way to motivate students. Incomplete folios result in an E grade and this may not reflect the quality of whatever work was completed.*
>
> *It ought not if they have planned, prepared and worked consistently. The ones who mainly suffer are those who have not worked.*

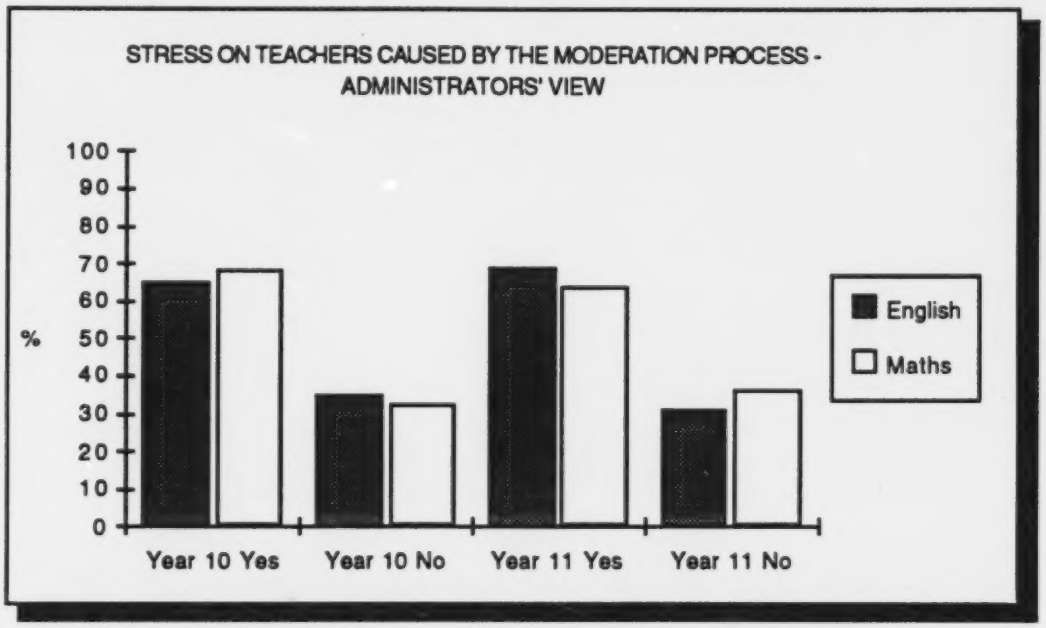
They need to 'perform' by presenting work hence extra time and effort is spent – often at the expense of other areas of study.

Folios and their importance become quite overwhelming and do not reflect their real worth.

Moderation of Mathematics was introduced in a futile attempt to avoid the external examination. Now that this exam is a fact of life, use it as the moderator as is done in NSW. This avoids undue stress on students and awards grades at certain levels to schools based on the performance of their students.

Question 13 asked administrators if they felt the moderation process caused undue stress for teachers. The answers were a reversal of those administrators gave for themselves and students, with most administrators saying that they felt that the moderation did place undue stress on teachers. For Year 10 English, 65% of the twenty administrators felt that moderation caused undue stress for these teachers, and with Mathematics the figure was 68%. For Year 11, the percentages were similar, with 69% saying that the moderation process caused undue stress to English teachers and 64% saying moderation caused undue stress for their Mathematics teachers. Graph 7 illustrates these figures.

Graph 7 Whether administrators felt moderation causes undue stress for teachers



The following comments are a sample of the reasons administrators put forward to explain why the moderation process causes undue stress on teachers in their schools and some possible solutions to this problem:

The process is meant to maintain a set standard of work. Staff feel they are regarded at fault if the standard is not met and they spend time and effort chasing students for outstanding work which is a waste of class time.

The conscientious ones get upset if not all the students hand in the folios – especially the good students.

Organisational demands on teacher time. Bureaucratic demands override professional commitments. Moderators' visits are mainly productive but

inevitably have some stress involved: Moderation meetings can cause disruptions and these generate stress across the school.

Moderation, with all its benefits, is a very time consuming process. Having to face possible criticism from peers is stressful. Stronger personalities often dominate moderation proceedings.

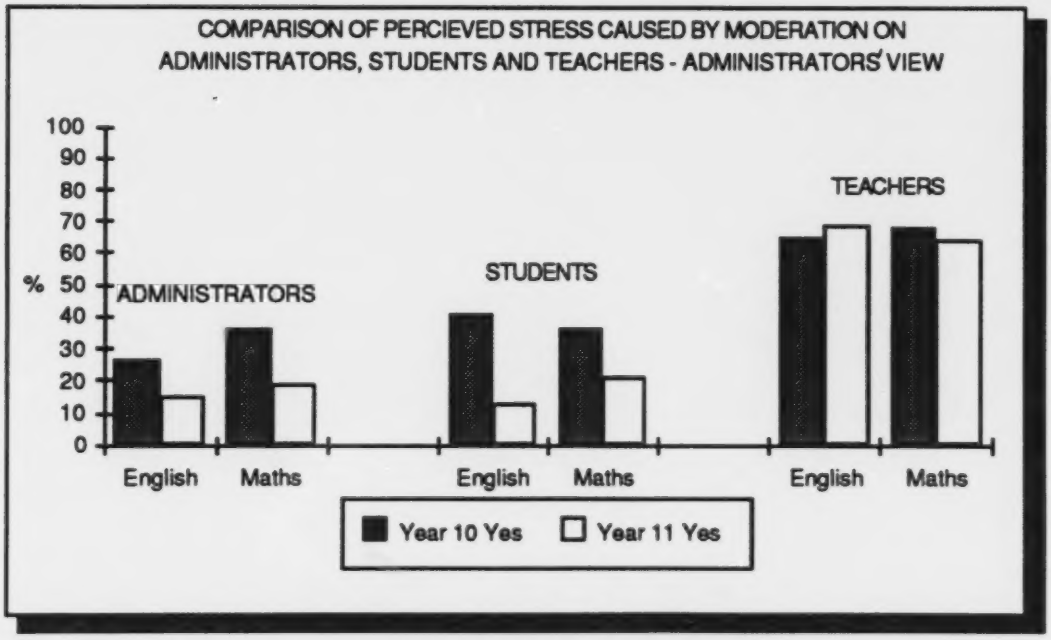
Because of the volume of work the whole system of moderation does place tremendous strain on the teachers. My staff accept this because of the benefits they feel accrue because of the process. Remedies – extra staff would lighten the load.

Preparation and organisation of personal work and records as well as students' folders is demanding. When one's work comes under scrutiny, stress is usually a by-product. The solution could be one moderation per year and one moderation visit.

New and less experienced teachers worry about it. English staff have to work long hours to ready work for internal moderation.

Abandon the present Year 10 moderation model and replace it by the Year 11 type without student folios. Use the Year 10 external exam as a moderator rather than as a direct 30% contributor to the students' personal grade – let it determine the grades each school can allocate.

Graph 8 Comparison of undue stress on administrators, students, and teachers



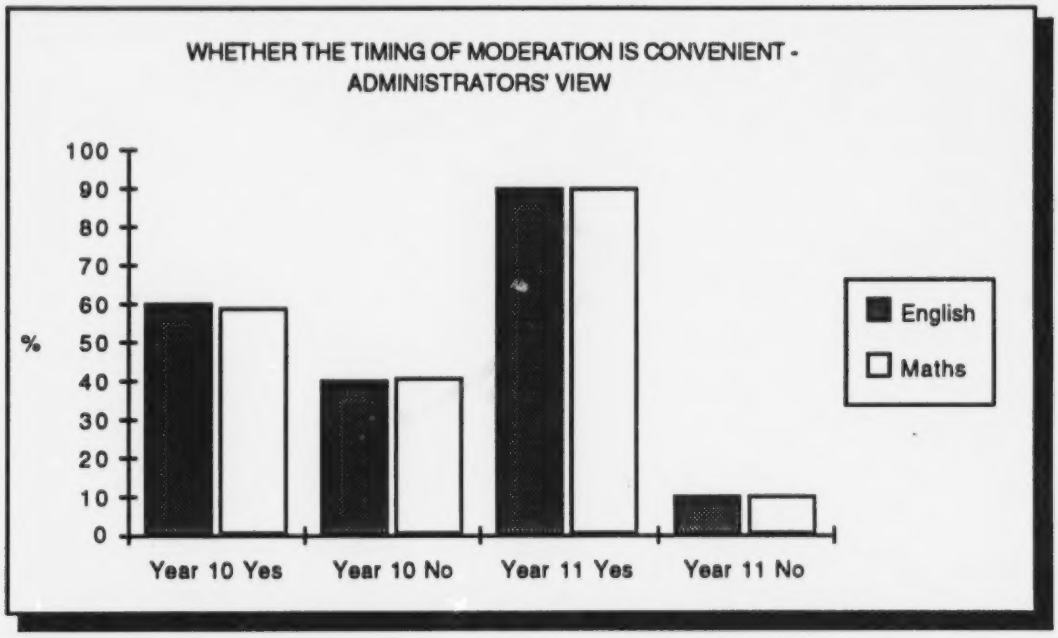
As can be seen from Graph 8, approximately 67% of administrators felt that current moderation procedures cause undue stress on teachers at both Year 10 and Year 11. It is also apparent that for administrators and students moderation caused stress for those involved at Year 10 more than at Year 11. The main reasons given for moderation causing stress on teachers were that: the process is very time consuming, teachers feel they are responsible for every student completing a folio and put in a lot of effort to achieve this, additional effort is required for preparation for moderation meetings, being scrutinised by peers can be stressful, and moderation requires constant record keeping and paperwork.

Some of the suggestions to alleviate this problem included having less moderation meetings, employing extra staff, having one moderation meeting and one visit per year, cutting out the folios at the Year 10 level in English, and using the Year 10 external examination mark as a moderator to determine the number of grades each school can allocate.

Question 14

Question 14 asked administrators whether they felt the moderation was being carried out at a convenient time for their staff and students. Of the twenty administrators who answered this question concerning English at Year 10, 60% said the timing was convenient and for Mathematics, 65% felt the timing was convenient. However, those who said the timing was not convenient provided several reasons including that the current timing does not allow time for all topics to be completed, that students see little need to do any more work once their marks have gone in, and that even if Year ten examination time remains the same the moderation mark could be submitted later. A sample of comments from those who consider the timing is not convenient is included after Graph 9. There were no comments made by those who said the timing was convenient. Of the 10 administrators who answered this question for Year 11, 90% said the timing was convenient. Graph 9 illustrates this information.

Graph 9 Whether the timing of moderation is convenient



Those who said the timing was not convenient made the following comments:

Students believe that their official school year is over once moderation is over.

Too early to allow for all topics to be completed and included in the process. Once moderation is completed, students see little need for further work.

If you count Year 10 exams as part of moderation their timing is ridiculous. No results should be submitted until the end of the year. There is no valid reason for the issuing of certificates at the end of the year. It invalidates all the last quarters' work.

Should happen at the very end, preferably in the last week of school.

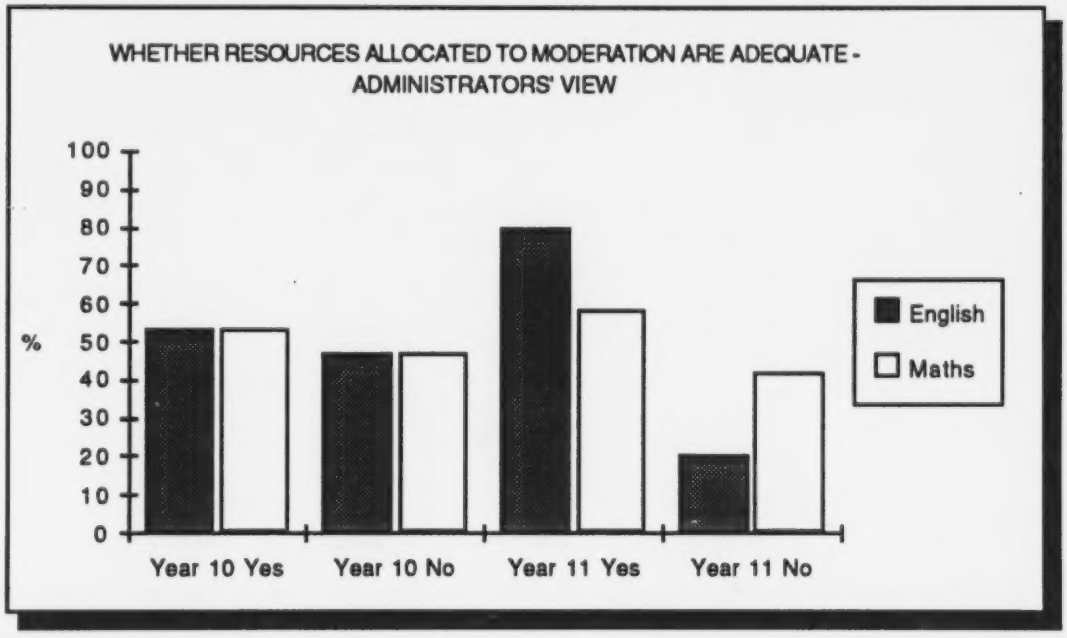
Too early in the term, no educational reason for present timing, just to get the marks on the JSSC.

With Year 10 Maths timing is not convenient. Current timing is too early – should be Week 4 Term 4.

Question 15

Question 15 asked whether administrators felt that resources allocated to moderation were adequate. As depicted in the comments which follow Graph 10, some took this to mean at a departmental level while others answered the question with regard to their school. It must be noted that less than half of the administrators who returned questionnaires answered this question. Of those who did answer with regards to the Year 10 level, approximately half said they felt resources allocated were adequate while the other half felt they were not adequate. At the Year 11 level, 80% per cent of those who answered this question felt that the resources allocated to moderation were adequate for English and 60% felt resources were adequate in the Mathematics area. Graph 10 provides a clear picture of this information.

Graph 10 Whether resources allocated to moderation are adequate



These comments are from administrators who consider resources allocated to moderation are not adequate:

Moderators visits are few. Departmental commitment needs to be increased.

One moderator is definitely inadequate for the whole of the NT. For a system so necessary and beneficial to teachers, parents and students, more resources are necessary.

Remote areas need more moderator visits and visits by teachers to other schools.

Not enough moderators.

No – more moderation is needed in other subjects and there must be monies/personnel taken from English/Maths to accommodate these developments.

Moderators should be in schools throughout the year advising and moderating and assessing all staff – not stuck in CAB carrying out administrivia.

Staff relief time should be provided. Maths and English moderation times should be kept well apart.

More visits for professional development required. Appoint two Year 11 Maths moderators.

The following comments are a sample from those administrators who consider resources allocated to moderation are adequate:

Too adequate – reduce the resources and thereby reduce the amount of teacher time required for out-of-school meetings.

Within the school yes. I think more moderators are needed.

More than adequate. There could be less moderation.

Questions 16 and 17

Question 16 asked whether moderation should be extended to other subjects and Question 17 asked for suggestions from administrators as to the processes which could be adopted if moderation were to be extended. Fifty-five per cent of the twenty-nine administrators who answered Question 16, felt that moderation should not be extended to other subjects and many of the comments which were offered provide reasons for this. It must be noted that comments are based on their experience with the current model of moderation:

We could just shut down the teaching processes altogether, and have lots of moderation meetings.

No. It is a very expensive way to compare standards and ensure system-wide accountability of schools and teachers. An external assessment task combined with detailed programming and assessment plan submitted to the Board of Studies for a percentage of internal school assessment should be preferable.

Who uses the JSSC? – 2% (who leave at the end of Year 10) and theirs is pretty damning.

English and Maths is enough.

No, not at Year 10 level or at Year 11 if the new SACE(NT) certificate will only record these as Pass or Fail.

Far too many classes requiring relief teachers.

The nature of the process and the diversity of courses would cause the creation of a monster.

Comments from administrators who thought moderation should be extended to other subjects, mainly Science and Social and Cultural Education (referred to as SACE), included:

> *I think it is a reasonably fair system which makes the whole learning/teaching process more open to professional and public scrutiny.*
>
> *If done properly with adequate resources.*
>
> *It is a requirement for SSABSA SAS and therefore staff in all subjects should have the benefit of the experience and training.*
>
> *If resourced properly, it must be a rigourous process; the present draft Science and SACE models do not meet this requirement. Moderation will ensure the correct courses are being taught and assessed appropriately.*
>
> *I like the idea of students being required to maintain a folio of work throughout the year and this could also be used in other subjects.*

Fourteen administrators (48%) provided suggestions for methods to be used if moderation were to be extended, however, two of these comments were against introducing moderation to other subjects. A sample of comments is provided below:

> *Learn from the current processes and make sure the system acknowledges the reality that a very large number of students are studying in vertically organized school with integrated classes.*
>
> *Follow Maths/English with changes suggested in the survey.*
>
> *Moderators and trainee moderators sound great but teachers are out of school too often – this has an adverse effect on students.*
>
> *Have the PEOs involved on a visitation basis only – collecting materials, comparing programs, supporting new teachers. The PEOs, as senior subject specialists, should be qualified to advise and assess the quality of teaching programs, and levels of achievement.*
>
> *Increase visitation moderation, decrease consensus moderation. If moderation is extended to other subjects this should be done in association with other forms of assessment e.g. external assessment tasks as I have some reservations about the ownership of some of the tasks completed by students particularly in SACE.*
>
> *SACE – similar assignments. Science – similar tests.*
>
> *The English moderation model (Year 11 & 12) is successful and useful.*
>
> *Single meeting, single visit by moderator and a single major work for comparison.*
>
> *Would depend on the subject.*

Question 18

Question 18 asked administrators what year level they felt was most suitable for external moderation to be introduced. Of the twenty-two administrators who answered this question 45% suggested Year 10, 41% suggested Year 11 and 14% suggested moderation should not

be introduced until Year 12. Some of the comments suggested that there should not be external moderation. The following provides a sample of comments:

Year 10. Prepares students for the process in Years 11 and 12.

Year 10. If extended again will take our best teachers out of the classroom.

Year 11. Courses are of semester length.

Year 11. It is at that stage that standardised results are important.

Year 11. The number of students leaving school are minimal and of these the majority would fail moderation due to lack of involvement. Moderation at the end of Year 10 is time wasting.

Year 11. The majority of students stay at school to Year 11.

Year 12. This would increase the value of the Year 12 Certificate, devalue earlier certificates, and encourage students to complete twelve years of formal schooling.

Year 12. Students are issued with a certificate for use to enter tertiary institutions. Where no exam is given, moderation should be used.

The present workload is 'enormous'. Couldn't cope with any more lower in the school – leave time for teachers to teach and prepare their lessons rather than get bogged down in clerical tasks associated with moderation which doesn't moderate anyway.

This presupposes that external moderation is essential or desirable – you have not asked this.

Question 19

Question 19 asked administrators if they would like to make any other comments regarding the moderation process. Approximately half of those who returned questionnaires took the opportunity to make further comment. The length, flavour and content of the comments varied considerably. The following are a sample to indicate this variety of comment:

We have enough paperwork with moderation. Stop asking us to fill in surveys and questionnaires and let us use our time in profitable, worthwhile ventures. What will become of the thoughts put forward in these response sheets? Status Quo, no doubt.

I feel very strongly that Moderation by consensus is very good.

Moderation over English seems to be well respected by staff as is the efforts made in some of the Business Education areas. Moderation in many areas is seen as not exacting enough and therefore not treated as anything more than a nuisance.

Many teachers see moderation as a nasty form of spying – very underhand, very secret. They see moderation not as a judgement of the students' work but a judgement of their own. If they were to prepare folios for presentation without giving a mark, (for the moderator to give a mark) the pressure would be off them.

The resources being committed should be closely examined against the original ideas of moderation which included both comprehensive assessment and professional development components.

Moderation is very positive in many ways for both students and teachers, however, it is not sufficient in itself to ensure objectivity and accountability in assessment. It is very costly in terms of teacher time and money.

We need moderation to produce a standard throughout the NT.

An educationally worthwhile form of assessment.

Despite the problems my staff feel that moderation gives them so much.

It is wasteful of resources, has some pluses in assisting teachers to interact. Places an undue stress on student performance relative to others rather than self.

It is developing past-its usefulness when marks are superimposed and then added to a false exam score to come up with a pseudo grade that means nothing in the marketplace, does not affect student progress and does not measure anything well. The original concept was useful, practical and had much to offer students and teachers and especially to Year 11 teachers. The JSSC is still a joke in the real world where employers want immeasurables like attitudes to be the criteria for assessment – proven in every study in every state.

As the process is carried out by classroom teachers, credibility must be given to their ability and professionalism. When this is the case, surely schools can be trusted to provide grades for their own students without making a major time-consuming exercise out of it. Despite all of the efforts and time staff put into this, students are still given an exam.

I believe the procedure used by English where they bring all teachers of Year 11 courses into Darwin or Alice Springs at the beginning of the course, irrespective of whether they have taught the course before is very wasteful (especially of money). Surely where only minor changes are made to a course from one year to the next, there is absolutely no need to spend thousands of dollars. Such changes can be communicated to subject seniors who should inservice faculty members.

Much more effective teaching tool than examination.

SUMMARY

The majority of school administrators who returned questionnaires indicated that they had a good understanding of the moderation process and felt that teachers in their schools who are involved with moderation also have a good understanding of the process. Most said that new staff were provided with both formal and informal inservice on moderation. Parents were also informed of the process through newsletters and handbooks and via parent information evenings and parent–teacher interviews.

Approximately 80% of administrators felt that participation in moderation contributes to teachers' professional development in that it allows for exchange of ideas, provides teachers with a realistic view of standards and promotes accountability by causing teachers to program and use curriculum documents. Approximately 20% of administrators were uncertain as to whether moderation contributed to teachers' professional development or disagreed that moderation made any contribution because they felt that too much effort was

required of teachers, that teachers felt threatened by the process, and that the time out of school caused disruptions to teaching programs.

For the question concerning comparability of standards, 65% of administrators indicated that they thought moderation was contributing to comparability, 15% were uncertain and 20% thought that moderation was not achieving comparable standards across the Territory. The reasons given by those who agree that moderation is achieving comparable standards were that it provides a realistic assessment of students' work and that the moderator can pass on knowledge of the required standards. Reasons given by those who disagreed were that the the only way of achieving comparability is to use common assessment instruments with defined marking schemes and that it is difficult to compare standards in such a variety of schools as exists in the Territory. Although not asked for, a couple of comments indicated that the English moderation process is more extensive and exacting than the Mathematics moderation.

With regards to the questions concerning problems related to moderation, the majority indicated that their schools do encounter problems while moderation is in progress and that the major problems are disruptions to classes because teachers are out of school, finding suitable relief staff, and the amount of paperwork involved. One of the major problems related to the fact that often a whole faculty is involved in the process and teachers may be out of the school for several days. This resulted in difficulties in finding suitable relief teachers and supervising the classes of teachers involved in moderation. Many administrators felt that the time taken for moderation is excessive. Approximately 25% of administrators who answered the question said that moderation did not cause any problems because administrative systems were in place to cope with teachers being out of the school.

On the question of whether smaller schools suffered more from the disruptions caused by moderation than larger schools, over half of the administrators felt that small schools did suffer more, 30% said the amount of disruption was the same for large and small schools while 15% indicated smaller schools did not suffer more than larger schools. The reasons given for smaller schools suffering more were that there are fewer teachers in smaller schools resulting in a greater proportion of staff being out of school for moderation and that it was more difficult for smaller schools, usually in smaller towns, to find suitable relief teachers.

The next set of questions asked administrators what aspects of moderation they found most beneficial for themselves, teachers and students. Only 60% of administrators answered this question with regards to benefits to themselves with 15% of these saying there were no benefits for themselves from moderation. The major benefits reported by administrators were professional development, confirmation of standards, and feedback to the school. Seventy-five per cent of the administrators answered this question with regard to benefits to staff and students. The major benefits for teachers were seen to be professional development, allowing teachers to see and achieve standards, and accountability. For students, benefits included motivation, establishing standards for them to strive for, and the satisfaction of presenting and being able to keep a folio of their work.

Questions 11, 12, and 13 asked administrators whether they felt moderation caused undue stress on their themselves, their teachers and students. In general, administrators felt that moderation did not place undue stress on themselves or their students but did cause undue stress for their teachers. Approximately 67% of administrators felt that current moderation procedures cause undue stress on teachers. The main reasons given for moderation causing stress on teachers were that: the process is very time consuming, teachers feel they are responsibility for every student completing a folio and put in a lot of effort to achieve this, additional effort is required for preparation for moderation meetings, being scrutinised by peers can be stressful, and moderation requires constant record keeping and paperwork. Some of the suggestions to alleviate this problem included having less moderation meetings, employing extra staff, having one moderation meeting and one visit per year, cutting out the

folios at the Year 10 level in English, and using the Year 10 external examination mark as a moderator to determine the number of grades each school can allocate.

Question 14 concerned the timing of moderation. Approximately 60% of administrators provided an answer to this question. At the Year 10 level 60% thought the timing was convenient while at Year 11, 90% said moderation was carried out at a convenient time. It appears that the timing of moderation for Year 10 is a greater problem than for Year 11. Several reasons were given for the argument for moderation to be later in the year. These included that the current timing (the end of semester three) does not allow time for all topics to be completed, that students see little need to do any more work once their marks have gone in, and that even if Year 10 examination time remains the same the moderation mark could be submitted later.

Question 15 asked administrators whether they considered resources allocated to moderation are adequate. Less than half of the administrators answered this question. Of those who did provide answers, approximately half said the resources were adequate for Year 10 while 80% said they were adequate for Year 11 English and 60% suggested resources were adequate for Year 11 Mathematics. The reasons provided for resources not being adequate were that there is a need for more moderators and more moderation visits, that remote area schools need more moderator visits and more visits by teachers to meetings and to other schools, and that more staff relief time is required. A couple of comments indicated that resources were more than adequate and that the amount of moderation should be reduced.

Questions 16 and 17 asked administrators whether moderation should be extended to other subjects and to suggest what processes could be adopted if moderation were introduced for other subjects. Fifty-five per cent of administrators felt that moderation should not be extended to other subjects, their reasons being that schools and teachers were under enough pressure with the English and Mathematics moderation. Of those who thought that moderation should be extended, their reasons included that moderation is a fair assessment system, that teachers gain professionally, and that it forces accountability.

Question 18 asked administrators at what year level they thought moderation should be introduced. Of the twenty-two who answered this question 45% said Year 10, 41% suggested Year 11 and 14% suggested Year 12. Several comments indicated that moderation should not be introduced at all.

Question 19 asked for any additional comments. These comments varied considerably and included topics ranging from the questionnaire, stress, the use of resources and the pros and cons of moderation.

5 VIEWS OF TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

Questionnaires were sent to all schools in the Northern Territory with Year 10 and/or Year 11 students. Enough questionnaires were sent to each school for all Year 10 and Year 11 teachers who were involved in English and Mathematics moderation to complete. Although the precise number of eligible respondents could not be calculated, the estimated number, as provided by the Principal Education Officers for English and Mathematics was approximately 280. Participation was voluntary and a total of 135 teachers (approximately 50%) from the twenty-three schools and colleges to which questionnaires were sent returned questionnaires. There were sixty-seven questionnaires from English teachers and sixty-eight questionnaires from Mathematics teachers.

The aim of this questionnaire was to get teachers' views on the moderation process. The questionnaire covered topics such as: teachers' understanding of the moderation process, comparison of the workload of teaching moderated and non-moderated subjects, whether moderation contributes to teachers' professional development, and aspects of moderation which were felt to be beneficial and those which caused problems. Teachers were also asked: whether they believed moderation is achieving comparability of standards across the Territory, whether the work put in a student's folios is a valid reflection of a student's ability, whether they thought moderation helped promote student learning or inhibited learning, whether the moderation process caused stress to themselves and their students, and whether they felt moderation should be extended to other subject areas.

This chapter provides an analysis of the responses to each question in the questionnaire as well as examples of the comments made by teachers. The majority of teachers who returned questionnaires provided full and detailed answers. Many obviously felt very strongly about moderation and spent a considerable amount of time and energy in completing the questionnaires.

FINDINGS

Questions 1, 2, 3, and 5

The first set of questions (questions 1, 2, 3 and 5) asked teachers how many years they had been teaching, how many years they had been teaching the moderated subject, whether they felt they were qualified to teach the moderated subject in question and whether they felt they had a good understanding of the moderation process.

Almost half of the teachers (48%) had been teaching for longer than ten years, 35% had been teaching for four to ten years and only 17% had been teaching for less than four years. All but three teachers at Year 10 and four at Year 11 felt they were qualified to teach the moderated subjects, i.e. 98% of Year 10 teachers and 97% of Year 11 teachers felt they were qualified to teach the moderated subject in question.

At the Year 10 level, 42% of teachers had been teaching moderated subjects for more than four years and 57% had taught moderated subjects for three years or less. At Year 11, 43% had been teaching moderated subjects for more than four years while 56% had been teaching moderated subjects for less than four years.

Almost all of the Year 11 teachers felt they had a good understanding of the moderation process with only one English teacher and three Mathematics teachers answering 'no' to this question. At the Year 10 level, four English teachers (6%) felt they did not have a good

understanding of moderation while eleven Mathematics teachers (22%) said they did not have a good understanding of the process. Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9 provide a breakdown of this information.

Table 6 The length of time teachers have been teaching

	0 – 3 Years	4 – 10 Years	10+ Years	Total
English	12	24	31	67
Maths	11	23	34	68
Total	23 (17%)	47 (35%)	65 (48%)	135

Table 7 Whether teachers consider they are qualified to teach the moderated subjects

	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No
English	89	0	71	0
Maths	55	3	50	4
Total	144 (98%)	3 (2%)	121 (97%)	4 (3%)

Table 8 Number of years teaching moderated subjects

	Y10, 0 – 3 Yrs	Y10, 4+ Yrs	Y11, 0 - 3 Yrs	Y11, 4+ Yrs
English	34	43	18	21
Maths	40	11	24	12
Total	74 (58%)	54 (42%)	42 (57%)	32 (43%)

Table 9 Teachers' understanding of the moderation process

	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No
English	64	4	51	1
Maths	48	11	41	3
Total	112 (88%)	15 (12%)	92 (96%)	4 (4%)

Question 4

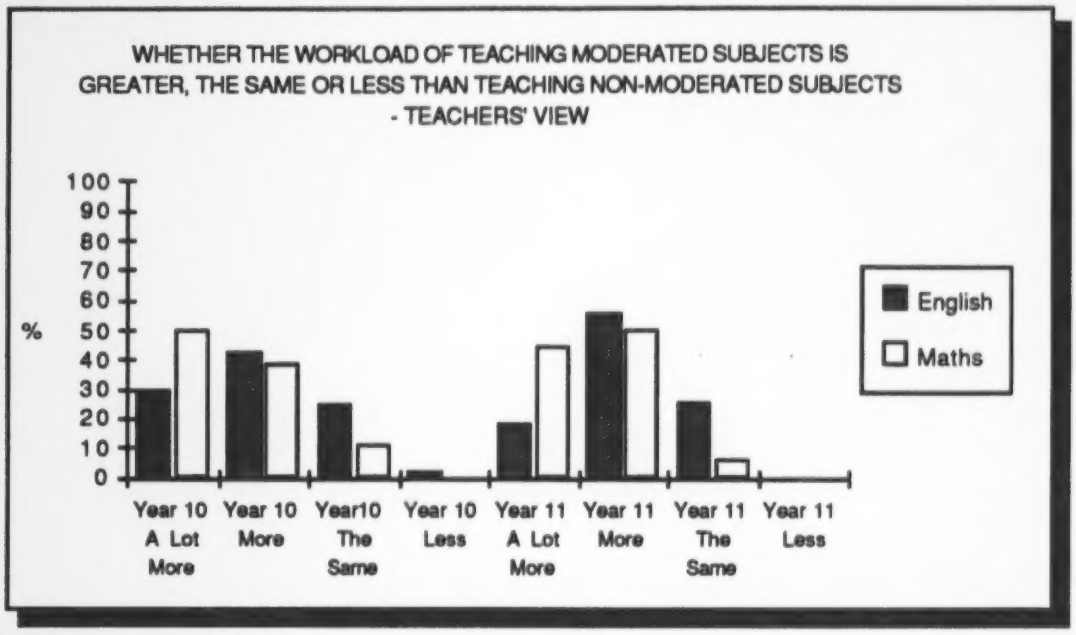
In question 4, teachers were asked to compare the workload in teaching moderated and non-moderated subjects. They were required to provide an answer on a four-point scale comprising 'a lot more work', 'more work', 'the same amount of work' and 'less work'.

Teachers of both Year 10 and Year 11 moderated classes felt that there was more work in teaching moderated subjects. Seventy-three per cent of Year 10 English teachers said that there was 'a lot more work' or 'more work' involved and 89% of Year 10 Mathematics teachers said moderated subjects involved a greater workload than the non-moderated subjects.

At the Year 11 level, 74% of the English teachers who answered this question said they found a greater workload than with non-moderated subjects and 94% of Year 11 Mathematics teachers said there was much more work involved with moderated subjects.

Graph 11 provides a pictorial representation of the summarised information for Question 4.

Graph 11 Whether moderated subjects involve more work than non-moderated subjects



Question 6

Question 6 asked teachers which they would choose if they had the choice of teaching moderated or non-moderated subjects and to give reasons for their choice of answer. At the Year 10 level 80% of the English teachers who answered this question said they would prefer to teach moderated subjects whereas the figures were almost reversed for Mathematics with only 25% saying they would prefer to teach moderated subjects and 75% saying they would prefer to teach non-moderated subjects. At Year 11, 75% of English teachers said they would prefer to teach moderated subjects while for Mathematics 55% indicated they would rather teach non-moderated subjects. A great number of comprehensive comments were provided. The main thrust of comments from teachers who said they would prefer to teach moderated subjects was that of professional development, comparability of standards, and a fairer marking system. The main reasons given for preferring non-moderated subjects were that moderated subjects entail extra work and time, they are educationally limiting and they cause stress for teachers and students.

The following comments are from those teachers who prefer to teach moderated subjects because they feel moderation provides them with guidance and professional support:

> *While moderated subjects require more teacher workload, there is inbuilt professional support via moderator and consensus meetings which are positive. It is hardest when teaching a moderated subject for the first time. There is much pressure, especially organisational, but moderation does give the subject status.*
>
> *In moderated subjects there are more guidelines to assist and the opportunity to share ideas with other teachers.*
>
> *Both teachers and students get ongoing feedback. The feedback from an outsider and interaction with other teachers and the moderator is very valuable.*

Moderators' visits are essential and all teachers should go to consensus meetings.

Moderation provides inservice for teachers. The standards are fair. Students have faith in the process and parents can see evidence of marks.

Work requirements are clearly specified, they are not onerous and there is a good support system – English.

Moderated as I believe it allows for more productive professional development and makes all teachers more accountable in terms of ensuring they cover all aspects of the course.

Moderation by consensus provides the opportunity for interaction and professional development.

The process ensures that students are less impeded by the idiosyncrasies of individual teachers. For teachers in remote areas there is the possibility of comparing methods and evaluation, possibly adjusting one's own performance.

Moderation covers a wide range of assessment/evaluation activities. It provides teachers and students with essential discussion. It allows teachers opportunities for sharing ideas and strategies.

The following comments are from those teachers who prefer to teach moderated subjects because they feel moderation is a fairer method of assessment, sets standards and provides comparability of grades:

Sets high standards for students to achieve which internal assessments would not.

Provides motivation for students to be well-organised, same for teacher. Good for students to see accumulation of a year's effort leading to final success.

Fairer assessment of students and moderation gives a wider scope for the use of a variety of assessment instruments.

Moderation is a fair representation of student's work allowing for fairer assessment.

Moderated courses are better for students, they have more control over what they learn and a clear idea of standards.

It gives all children an equal chance. You know where you stand and at what level students are at, at any given time.

Moderation ensures comparability of grades across classes/schools.

Helps achieve comparable standards and helps eliminate poor teaching practices.

I prefer to teach moderated subjects because despite the paperwork I feel my students and I are confident of the standards we are achieving.

Provides grades that are consistent and ensures students are receiving comparable education at one level. It provides accountability of teacher and courses and provides constant feedback for students, teachers and the school.

I prefer moderated courses because of the opportunity to ensure that my standards of assessment are accurate, and the chance to share ideas with other teachers.

The moderation process is a far more educationally valid process of assessment than exams. It encourages student responsibility for their work and makes teachers more accountable.

Encourages both staff and students to be more organised and meet an accepted standard. Moderation directs what is taught.

The following comments are from those teachers who would prefer to teach non-moderated subjects because they feel moderation causes extra work and is more time-consuming:

Moderation is very time consuming and teachers are taken out of classrooms.

Moderation has grown out of all proportion. Teachers are inundated with bits of paper to be completed. Too much time is spent fulfilling requirements rather than catering to student needs. The folio becomes the focus of energy.

Students don't understand moderation process. It is difficult to get them to organise their folders. I've found myself organising them constantly.

The following comments are from those teachers who would prefer to teach non-moderated subjects because they feel moderation is limiting in what teachers are able to teach their students:

Course requirements are restrictive and cumbersome and moderation does not suit many students.

Non-moderated. Although I agree with moderation I believe the Territory has created a monster. In Western Australia only senior subjects were moderated. Year 10 results were discussed internally. I find the Year 10 folio too limiting. If you have a middle to low level class you spend a lot of time in class patching up the folio for presentation. Who is being moderated – the teacher or the student? Year 11 is too early to reflect the true ability of the students.

Other comments from those teachers who would prefer to teach non-moderated subjects:

Although the general trend is away from public examinations this to me is still the most appropriate form of assessment. Therefore it would be non-moderated but examined subjects that I would prefer to teach. In the current situation however it is better moderated than teacher graded.

The moderation process has become a concern for a display of 'mastery' of elementary tasks only.

Of course I would prefer non-moderated subjects. Who, in his right senses, would put unwanted stress over his shoulders?

Non-moderated as there would be less stress and freedom to engage in non-compulsory activities. Better results are achieved if the workload is not presented and directed by non-teaching staff.

Non moderated – the stress put on teachers to extract work from unmotivated students is too great. I doubt that the energy expended is worth the end product. Many students are too young and do not possess the necessary organisational skills to maintain folios and the like.

Questions 7 and 8

Question 7 asked teachers which aspects of the moderation process they personally found most beneficial. Question 8 asked teachers which aspects of moderation caused them most problems. Understandably, those who answered Question 7 were generally in favour of moderation while some of the teachers who were opposed to moderation took the opportunity in Question 8 to air their opinions. It must be noted, however, that approximately 12% of teachers who answered Question 7 indicated moderation provided no benefit to them by answering 'none' to this question.

For Question 7, approximately half of the teachers who returned questionnaires provided an answer and of those, 95% mentioned professional development as the area of most benefit. As comments varied slightly between Mathematics and English teachers these have been presented separately. The following comments show the range of answers provided by Mathematics teachers for this question:

> *Year 10. The advantages are seeing other teachers. At Year 11 there are no benefits.*
>
> *The most beneficial aspect is moderation days, when you gain insight into other teachers' methods and assessment.*
>
> *Structure forces early detailed programming.*
>
> *Talking with moderator. Comparing inter-school standards.*
>
> *Exchange of ideas and suggestions from the moderator.*
>
> *You know the requirements and get feedback. You also learn about other schools.*
>
> *Having a clear picture of the entire years' assessment policy is useful.*
>
> *I feel better qualified than the moderator in my subject area.*
>
> *Professional development. Standardised grades. Consistency. Reassessment of work.*
>
> *Having detailed history of new students.*

A lot more comments were made by the English teachers. The aspects which they found most beneficial personally were the exchange of ideas and comparison of standards. Over half of the teachers who answered this question mentioned that consensus meeting were beneficial. A sample of comments which depict these teachers thoughts are presented below:

> *Moderators' visit mid semester focuses the students' attention on presenting their folios for an objective audience – more clout. The moderators' visits and meetings give new ideas and fresh outlooks.*
>
> *Moderation meetings allow teachers to share strategies and standards. It is a form of ongoing inservice.*
>
> *Little consultation at ... (a remote centre).*

The facility of comparison of standards – being able to contact colleagues with Year 10 classes and seeking agreement on a particular student's work.

Consensus meetings are the most beneficial. Viewing folios from other schools and from past years gives a good view of what to aim for.

Moderation encourages staff to share ideas. The moderator provides excellent support. Moderation allows for a comparison of work.

Feedback from the moderation process serves as inservice with regard to ideas and strategies.

All three moderation meetings. Getting new ideas, validating standards, evaluation of own your own program. An opportunity to review in some detail the range of quality work produced by the students.

The establishment of clear standards for marking is important to me. I think it ensures fairness to students too.

Discussion with colleagues about programming to achieve learning outcomes. Consensus meetings provide practice in marking students' work and seeing a wider range of student work.

The initial meeting attunes your teaching to the demands, structures and assessment procedures of the course. The final moderation meeting assists with standards.

Internal moderation I find beneficial, however, you don't really require a structured folio to carry out internal moderation – a range of pieces of work would suffice. Comments and discussion with other teachers is most useful.

Both English and Mathematics teachers provided a lot of responses to Question 8 regarding the problems caused by moderation. Although many of the comments were interrelated e.g. 'The amount of clerical work involved is very time consuming which causes less time to be spent teaching', the main problems mentioned were related to organising students to complete work and keep their folios up to date, the amount of paperwork involved, the time spent out of class at moderation meetings, and the interpretation of course requirements. It must also be noted that approximately 12% of those who answered this question said they had no problems with the moderation process.

The following comments highlight the problems teachers encounter in getting students to complete work for the folio:

The biggest problem is motivating students to complete folios and assignments on time.

Getting students to accept responsibility for the organisation and the maintenance of folios. Filling out forms appears irrelevant and is so time consuming.

Inability on the part of less capable students to understand moderation.

Impressing upon students the requirements for their folios and getting them to take responsibility for their own work.

Making sure all tasks are completed. Having students in lower ability groups organise folios for presentation is a nightmare.

Other problems teachers mentioned were the interpretation of course documents, the lack of inservice, and the actual process of moderation:

The internal moderation did not run smoothly as the senior teachers had not had experience with final moderation meetings and did not have an understanding of the process or standards.

Staff not reading course booklets is a nuisance.

Deciphering documents and information locked into the frameworks.

Understanding exactly what should be the English folio. I believe the requirements could be simplified.

Interpretation of Year 11 Language & Literature documents. These need rewriting. Presentation and art work influences marks too much.

There are too many activities included in the folio as a product of a year's work.

Inadequacy of the Applied Maths document.

Differing view of the moderator from the course document.

Determining suitability of assessment instruments.

There is insufficient information on the process – need inservice on administrative details.

The whole process of moderation is poorly prepared and woefully inserviced.

The time line for moderation, the time taken in administration, and the amount of paperwork involved were also commented on by teachers:

Folio requirement – students find this difficult despite TOO MUCH time spent on organising and explaining during class.

Getting time off to attend moderation meetings and preparing for relief teachers.

The time required for administration is ridiculous.

Timing – how to produce work before the first mid moderation and completing the course before the final moderation.

Deadlines are too early. Moderation does not help with personal teaching.

Teaching new teachers the process is time consuming. There are difficulties in comparing students with vertical timetables.

Other comments included:

Standards are not high enough. The current process is teaching kids to produce and not to think.

There are a lot of problems – getting students to keep their work, the amount of paperwork, the amount of marking, restriction of folio requirements and the

mini consensus meetings during which I am expected to moderate work that in my school would not be accepted.

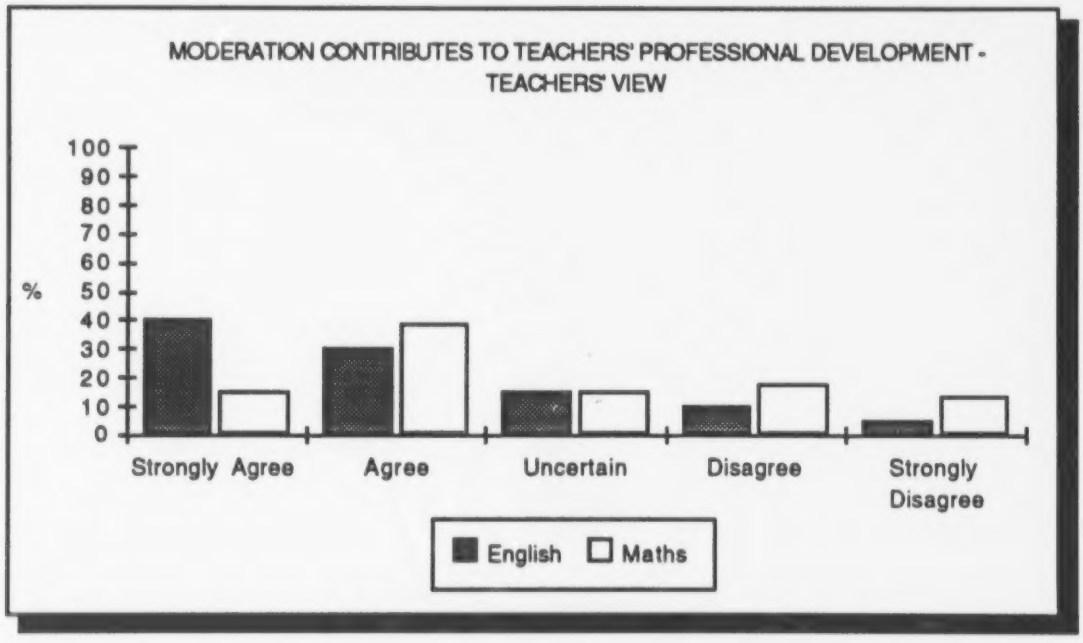
The biggest problem is forcing students to do work that I cannot personally justify. Wider-reading is a problem because of time and educational justification. Controlled wider-reading would be fine but personal choice I feel is not necessarily educative. Making students write poetry and play scripts seems to be a waste of time. Allowing them to do it is okay but a compulsory part with equal weight to an objective of understanding whether work is expository or argument seems ludicrous. It causes personal dilemmas for me.

Maintaining marks across classes of the same level, covering all assignment types, ensuring student folios are complete, and what to do with interstate students.

Question 9

Question 9 asked teachers whether they considered the moderation process contributes to teachers' professional development. They were asked to provide an answer on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to strongly disagree' and then to provide reasons for their choice. Forty per cent of English teachers strongly agreed that moderation contributes to teachers' professional development, 30% agreed, 10% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed. Fifteen per cent of Mathematics teachers strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 18% disagreed and 13% strongly disagree. For both Mathematics and English 15% of teachers were uncertain. Graph 12 provides a pictorial presentation of teachers responses to this question.

Graph 12 Whether moderation contributes to teachers' professional development



As can be seen from Graph 12, 70% of English teachers were in agreement that moderation contributes to teachers' professional development and for Mathematics, 54% were in agreement and 31% disagreed that moderation promoted teachers' professional development.

The following comments give an idea of the reasons why teachers agreed that moderation contributes to teachers' professional development:

Provides access to experienced teachers who willingly provide course information and teaching strategies. It is the only inservice currently operating.

Have witnessed the steady rise in general English standards – even though the clientele is unchanged.

Promotes sharing of ideas, strategies, problems and solutions. It helps less experienced teachers and reinvigorates the rest.

Opens communication channels and encourages participation at all levels.

They have to accept accountability to students and parents. Teachers are forced to choose work that complies to a generalised philosophical framework.

Yes at least it goes part-way to ensuring that all teachers are in touch with current English teaching methods.

Interaction between teachers at consensus meetings. It provides support for new teachers to courses. Sharing of ideas and strategies.

Mini consensus meetings allow teachers across the Territory the opportunity to evaluate their students' work against that of other students. Teachers benefit from getting together and sharing ideas. It gives teachers confidence in awarding grades.

Obviously a 'mini inservice' situation exists in moderation – planning, programming, techniques and approaches, standards, methods of assessment and good ideas. All are covered.

When there are regular meetings, information and requirements to be met the staff and students can only benefit.

Having to meet certain criteria and standards gives professional direction.

It makes you realise you have to justify to colleagues your marking process and individual exercises/projects completed during the year.

With removal of most Maths inservice opportunity it provides for teachers to get together.

By moderating other school's papers, teachers learn to set good exam papers themselves.

Accountability of teachers.

The following comments were provided by teachers who did not agree that moderation contributes to teachers' professional development:

Makes no difference there are other ways.

Moderation is unnecessary for professional development. Who wants to mark work for two days?

How can it when it is the source of unnecessary strain?

Moderation demands have caused many good staff to change subjects.

It seems that to get through the required amount of work you need to know a little about a lot of things. The depth in the work becomes lost.

Teachers do change habits on the basis of moderation, but if they do not respect the views of those who moderate, why should they change?

Where do I find a definition of your term moderation process?

Moderation is simply a clerical exercise.

Teachers are so involved with the process there is no time for development. The process is mainly paper shuffling.

Open to cheating, not by students but by teachers.

Teachers have no power in decision making.

A good subject senior can contribute much more.

Moderation should do but it hassles teachers. The Year 12 SAABSA model should be aimed for.

Unnecessary administration and paperwork. The use of a standard i.e. the Year 10 Maths exam takes away the need for any other moderation process.

Retards professional development because of the time involved. Acceptable tasks change for each moderation.

Employed as a teacher not a clerk.

A few comments were provided by those teachers who were uncertain as to whether moderation contributes to teachers' professional development:

There is a tendency at moderation for some teachers (who appear to be long-term acquaintances, if not friends) to push their own particular barrows very hard, and with the uncertain result that the needs of new teachers either are neglected, or lost in the process...There is, and I am sorry to have to say this, a real appearance of power play over interpretation and development of curriculum which defeats new arrivals.

Does contribute to professional development but so would other processes.

It could if it were truly professional but it seems to me to lack respect from and trust in the teacher. A 'Big Brother' operating on fear is not likely, in my opinion, to succeed. Teachers will produce their best work when they are treated professionally and given some say in the process they are expected to implement.

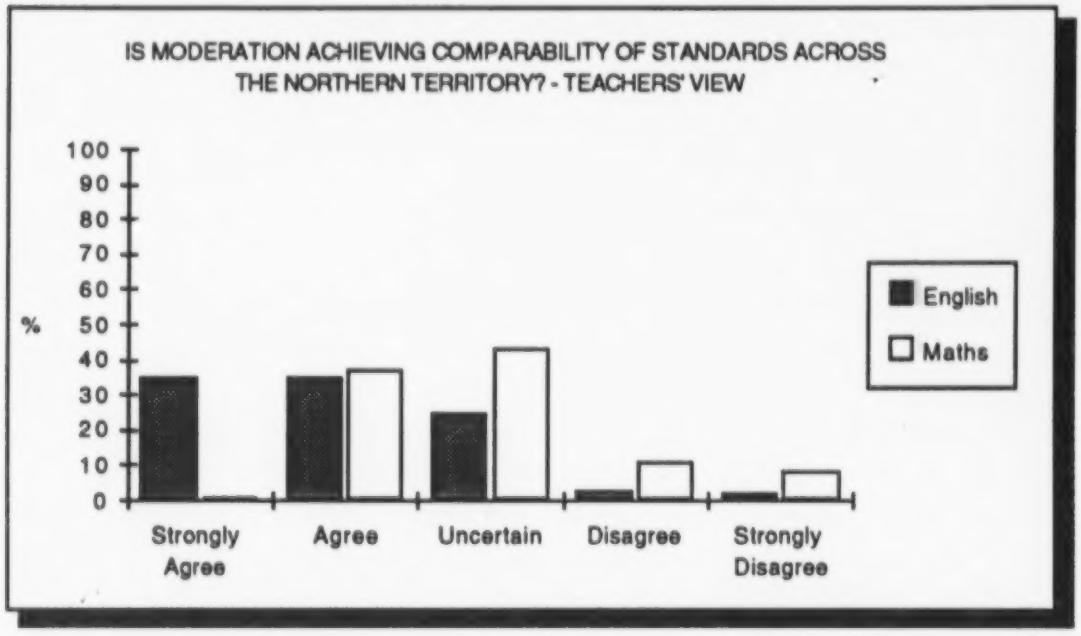
Learning new ideas is good but administration is a negative aspect.

Efficient teachers don't need checking they need a network. Inefficient teachers need checking but I am not sure if the moderator is the right person.

Question 10

Question 10 required teachers to provide a response on a five-point scale to the statement 'Moderation is achieving comparability of standards across the Northern Territory'. The scale ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' as with Question 9. With English, 70% of teachers 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that moderation was achieving comparability. Only 1% of Mathematics teachers 'strongly agreed' that moderation was achieving comparability and 37% 'agreed'. Forty-three per cent of the Mathematics teachers were uncertain compared to 25% of the English teachers who gave 'uncertain' as their answer. Nineteen per cent of Mathematics teachers were in disagreement that moderation was achieving comparability as against 5% of the English teachers who 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. Graph 13 shows this information. The second part of this question was a request for teachers to explain their choice of answer. A selection of comments depicting teachers reasons for agreeing or disagreeing follow Graph 13.

Graph 13 Whether teachers believe that moderation is achieving comparability of standards



The following comments are from teachers who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that moderation is achieving comparability across the Northern Territory. Understandably most of these comments are from English teachers:

Folios are carefully monitored by the moderator and consensus meetings provide access to all teachers' work.

Rare that grades differ greatly.

Many teachers work in virtual isolation, even in secondary schools. Visitation moderation helps achieve comparability in that the moderator sees a wide range of samples of student work. Consensus moderation ensures that teachers have access to a similar range of work.

All Year 10 students in the Territory are exposed to Narrative, Expository, Descriptive, Non-Prose Writings and Media Activities...During moderation these areas are checked more closely and rated for each student at a particular

time of the year. Annually a review of procedures is made and ideas circulated for best results. Coordination and cooperation between students and teachers is heightened as well as teacher–teacher and school–school cooperation.

(Comparability) is being achieved, not only in what contributes an A, B, C, but also the expectations that teachers have in the tasks they are asking students to tackle.

Provides teachers with a much clearer understanding of the standards and grades used and confidence in applying them.

The process, done in the efficient and professional manner to which we have become accustomed, enables a very clear understanding to develop.

Students feel confident they are meeting similar standards.

Encourages teachers to work towards a reasonably uniform level and type of achievement.

The following comments are from teachers who 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that moderation is achieving comparability across the Northern Territory:

After moderating Year 10 folios last year I disagree. There was so much disparity in standards. Some teachers and students are taking an easy road to JSSC and it is annoying for those of us trying to stick to Departmental Guidelines. Some people don't moderate well at the meetings. It is all a matter of perception.

Requirements are interpreted differently by different teachers.

Moderation is way of keeping check on teachers rather than standards.

Easy to only make moderator aware of selective pieces.

Moderation can be biased. Aggressive and outspoken teachers get what they want.

Exams would achieve comparabilty, moderation can be rigged.

Not possible to achieve because of the variety of schools, equipment, resources available, courses and teachers.

Common curriculum achieves this, not moderation.

Forty-three per cent of Mathematics teachers and 25% of English teachers were uncertain as to whether moderation was achieving comparability of standards across the Territory. The following comments depict their views; the majority of comments are from mathematics teachers:

Opportunity in the system to stack marks.

Not possible given the different conditions found in NT schools.

Some teachers don't grade students to what students deserve.

As work is marked over period of time, ideas of standards change over time therefore it is not consistent.

Does not improve standard of substandard schools.

From marking Year 10 Maths last year there is no comparability.

Classroom work not represented in folios.

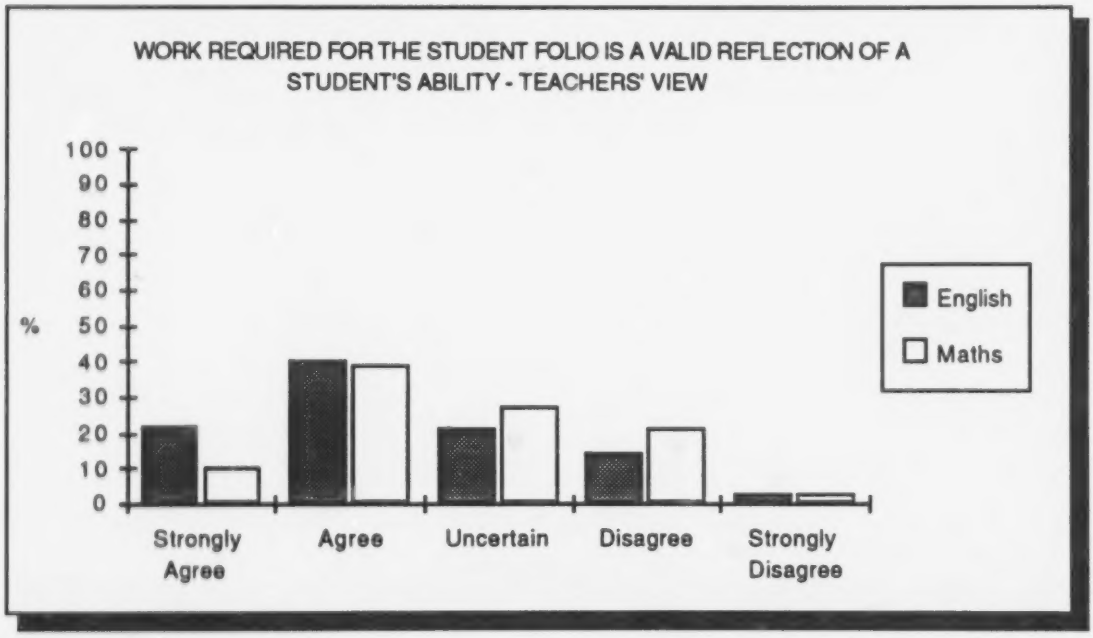
With high turnover of staff and students it is difficult to keep everyone aware of what is going on.

Comparability is being achieved, but not necessarily through moderation. If students continue through to Year 11, grades are irrelevant.

Question 11

Question 11 asked teachers if they felt the student folio is a valid reflection of a student's ability. Teachers were required to provide a response on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. A total of 62% of English teachers were in agreement, 21% were uncertain, and a total of 17% were in disagreement. Forty-nine per cent of Mathematics teachers 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 27% were uncertain and 24% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. Graph 14 provides this information graphically. The second part of this question required teachers to explain the reasons for their choice of answer. A sample of comments follows the graph.

Graph 14 Whether work required for the folio is a valid reflection of a student's ability



The following comments are a sample from teachers who were in agreement that the work required for student folios is a true reflection of their ability:

Not only of student ability in a particular subject but of reliability and consistency of student effort.

In my five years experience, the work required is a valid reflection of ability.

Scope is sufficient to reflect ability.

At Year 11, I agree with work requirements. For Year 10, I feel that the work required for English folios makes the task more difficult than it needs to be.

Students are given many opportunities to perform to the best of their ability in different activities.

Representative of their best work covered in the course.

With the number of work requirements, students need a consistent effort to enable their best efforts to be reflected.

The multiple aspects of students work reflects ability rather than one-off exam.

The following comments are a sample from teachers who disagreed that the work required for student folios is a true reflection of their ability:

Students with conscientious teachers pass, students with slack teachers fail.

Moderation demands a strong work ethic from students so that can count more than ability.

Reflects an ability only in the subject followed. There should be two English courses offered at Year 9 - 10 (in Maths there are three). A student who does not complete the folio is awarded an 'E'. This is not a reflection of ability but rather of industry.

Too structured and too rigid. Year 10 folio is tedious, tiresome and lacking in imagination. Really limits what you can do. Time wasted finishing pieces for the folio and organising, not time efficient.

The most accurate reflection of student ability is the teacher's mark book. The folio can be 'doctored up' to reflect skills beyond the student's capabilities.

Process system does not always reflect the student's true ability and actually inflates what a student is capable of.

Dressing up work does not reflect student's ability.

With rewrite and teacher's help a student's only real piece of work is the prose under supervision.

Parental support as high a factor as student ability.

Too much guidance to be a real reflection of student ability. There is always an opportunity for cheating.

No allowance for informal assessment (observation), everything has to be marked.

The following comments are a sample from teachers who were uncertain that the work required for students' folios is a true reflection of their ability:

Students ability to cover the wide range of work requirements is reflected but not their ability to write competently.

Maybe more scope needed, possibly a section exhibiting the learning process e.g. notes, exercises, writing practices, examples of developed writing.

Choosing their best pieces for folios. Process writing does not reflect their true ability.

Redrafting process is wide open for teacher/parent/other student interference.

There is a lot of time spent on redrafting/revision. Students can produce minimum folio requirements easily, yet do very little work in the subject for the semester or year.

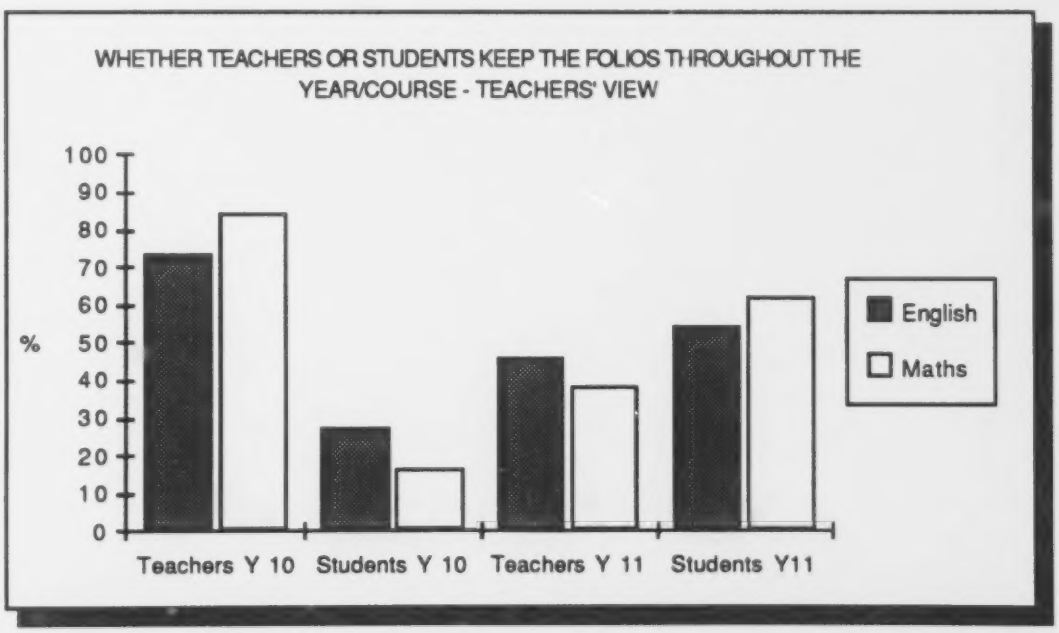
Probably, but not a dramatically better measure than exams.

Organisation and presentation of folders is more important than work included.

Question 12

Question 12 asked teachers whether they kept student folios during the year or whether the students kept them. They were then asked to give reasons for their answer. At the Year 10 level in English it was reported by 73% of the teachers that teachers kept the folios. At Year 11 English, 46% of teachers said they kept the folios while 54% reported that the students kept the folios. For Mathematics at Year 10, 84% of the teachers reported they kept the folios, while for Year 11, 62% said the students kept the folios. The reasons given for the differences between Year 11 and Year 10 in the two subjects were that the students in Year 11 are more responsible than those in Year 10 and that the Year 11 courses were usually of one semester length which meant the students had to look after their folios for a shorter period of time than at Year 10 where courses usually run the whole year. Graph 15 gives a pictorial view of this information. Comments from teachers are provided after the graph.

Graph 15 Whether the teachers or students keep the folios



Student is expected to be responsible for own progress and own possessions.

Vertical timetabling makes it unfeasible for the folios to be kept by one teacher.

Students must be responsible for their folio. Already, one of my more irresponsible but capable students has lost her excellent folio. She'll now have to work very hard and pay the price for her mistake.

Left in cupboard for constant student access for those students who desire to leave them there, others keep their own.

The following comments are the reasons given for the teachers keeping the Year 10 English folios and the students keeping the Year 11 folios:

Year 10 have not yet learnt to keep things that may be valuable at a later date and have to keep things for the whole year.

Year 11 have to keep things secure for a much shorter time and are more conscientious.

Year 11 can look after their own whereas Year 10 have difficulty.

At Year 10 keeping the folios for the students ensures student work ownership and avoids loss. Year 11 keep their own.

At Year 10 it is still compulsory schooling for most and the courses are a year long with a huge amount of work collected before final selection of folio pieces.

The following comments are the explanation provided for the teachers keeping both Year 10 and Year 11 folios:

Keeping the folios for both Year 10 and Year 11 students saves a lot of headache and panic when it is time for moderation.

Students forget to bring folios at the required time or they get misplaced or lost.

I keep the folios in order to monitor progress in terms of minimum requirements.

Teachers keep the folios as this is the policy of the school.

Question 13

Question 13 asked teachers what they found to be the major problems in getting folios ready for moderation. As many of the comments covered topics mentioned earlier only a small number of those which raised other problems are mentioned here:

Reassessing and re-grading every piece as it is rewritten.

Comparison of units in a vertical system makes it difficult to organise cover sheets. There is no need for students' Assessment Files to go to moderation. Teachers need only take course outlines and assessment instruments and the moderator should review student work during visits to schools.

The moderation process is not established for vertically grouped or unitised curriculum in mind.

Appearances more important than content resulting in trivialisation of courses.

Students have only limited access to files for revision as these have to be kept by the teacher.

TIME requirements for ranking and converting grades into scores is a paradox.

Communicating requirements to students and persuading them to maintain organisational standards throughout the process is very difficult.

Weaker students need lots of help meeting requirements. Sometimes I feel that their needs might be more realistically served better in a less structured, skill-oriented course.

Cover sheets for individual pieces needs simplifying. Students cannot complete these unaided.

With students there will always be a small percentage who exercise their right to fail.

The sheer numbers when you are teaching four moderated subjects creates many problems.

Questions 14 and 15

Questions 14 and 15 asked teachers how sure they were that the assignment work handed in by students for moderation is the student's own work and whether the the ownership of student work posed a problem for moderation. With English, 90% of the teachers did not see a problem with ownership. Their explanation for knowing that work is the student's own is that the initial preparation of pieces is done in class, they work with students and get to know their 'style' and the Prose Under Supervision exercise serves as a check. For Mathematics 50% of teachers felt there was a problem with ownership of assignment work as the Mathematics work is more uniform, and if students work together, especially on a computer, a printed correct answer which may not be the student's own is hard to detect. However, as the Assessment File contains students' tests and other classwork, this was not a major problem for moderation of student files. As comments were very similar only a small number covering the range of comments are included here:

Some plagiarism but moderation assists in picking this up.

You see their work in class. Need to question any dramatic improvement.

From experience generally evident from the standard of work.
Prose Under Supervision is a further check.

Most students produce their own work. A teacher usually knows their student's ability.

Usually students do their own work and this process also enables you to look at first drafts. However, students have told me it is common to borrow completed folios and use other students' work. 'It's not hard to produce a first draft from a final essay'.

Drafting is done in class and there is lots of discussion on an individual basis, particularly with weaker students to build up confidence to ensure they do not seek outside help.

Not a problem. I would be extremely surprised if much got past a consensus moderation.

If teachers regularly sight work in progress and discuss it then there is no difficulty.

Some students and parents will do anything to achieve impressive results.

If great similarity students lose marks. Most students are competitive so do not share their work with others.

Questions 16 and 17

Question 16 asked teachers in what ways moderation promoted student learning while Question 17 asked them in what ways they felt moderation inhibited student learning. There was a range of comments provided in answer to these two questions. For both questions several teachers answered 'none' to each or both of the questions i.e. they felt that moderation does not promote student learning or that moderation does not inhibit learning.

The main reasons teachers saw for moderation promoting student learning were that it encouraged them to try harder, take pride in their work, gain organisational skills, meet deadlines and indirectly through improving teaching. The following comments are a sample from teachers with regard to this topic:

Students become motivated to compete against students Territory-wide. Moderation also ensures variety of work instead of tests.

Good teaching only promotes learning. Moderation makes teachers accountable.

Students take pride in work if it is shown to others.

Moderation provides feedback from several sources. It allows students to produce a physical document they can be proud of. It gives them confidence.

Moderation ensures staff teach a variety of genre, oral work etc. It ensures students are not neglected. Teachers have a professional responsibility to meet folio requirements.

Forces students to take responsibility for their own work/organisation and meeting criteria and deadlines.

Students feel their work is worthwhile – it is taken seriously.

Encourages drafting, experiment, risk taking, consultation with teacher and peers, pride in the finished product, clear objectives.

Students learn to organise their own work and take responsibility for the contents of their folios. They learn to negotiate tasks and to evaluate their own program and progress.

It promotes a sense of achievement and therefore pride in work. It provides a focus for the year's work and a proof of a range of writing and oral skills.

The students themselves become very aware of the reality of relativity and competition and comparability.

Gives them the idea that standards are important and that their effort is rewarded. For ESL and Special Ed students it may have a negative effect since they need more time to attain those standards, or perhaps those standards are unrealistic.

Moderation allows for writing development. It allows a greater range and variety of tasks and writing forms.

Teachers have lots more ideas about standards across their form and Territory. Shared ideas too help teacher inservice therefore leads to a more dynamic classroom in which to learn.

Actively inservicing teachers which encourages and reinforces approaches in class which results in promotion of student learning. Standards are clear - teacher's judgement is reinforced. New ideas, strategies and approaches constantly re-inspire the teacher.

It promotes an orientation for the teacher which inevitably flows on to students. All aspects of the process makes better teachers and better courses which in turn means learning.

Keeps teachers and students to a constant pace and on line with curriculum. Rather than cram for exams students acquire skills throughout the course.

Moderation promotes student learning because students actually become aware of their own thinking processes from discussion through the drafting stages to their final piece.

It makes students interested in their work and therefore must encourage learning. Folios give students a purpose and pride in their work.

The main reasons teachers saw for moderation inhibiting student learning were:

Students think all work is just for testing and assessment. It limits learning especially when combined with exams.

Moderation puts a time limit on topics. There is no opportunity for extension work, or extending brighter kids.

Takes time away from tasks which do promote learning. Teaching is restricted to the way the moderator deems appropriate.

Rigid structure removes all opportunity for genuine teaching.

Oral activities not included.

Restricts in depth study of interest, what has to go in the folio becomes the focus of what is taught – if it doesn't have to go in the folio students don't see the need to do it.

Some can't cope with the pressure of 'keepin up'. It does not indicate how much a student has improved.

Cannot specialise or pursue a particular topic because of the range of requirements.

Too much emphasis is placed on the folio, on appearances and on the moderation requirements. This concentration is at the expense of individual student needs. There exists an inflexibility that inhibits the spontaneity often associated with 'good' teaching.

Students only interested in fulfilling minimum requirements. It is difficult to motivate students to work after moderation and exams/folio.

The less time spent on the course due to organisational and clerical responsibilities the less learning/teaching time. Moderation puts constraints on both teacher and student.

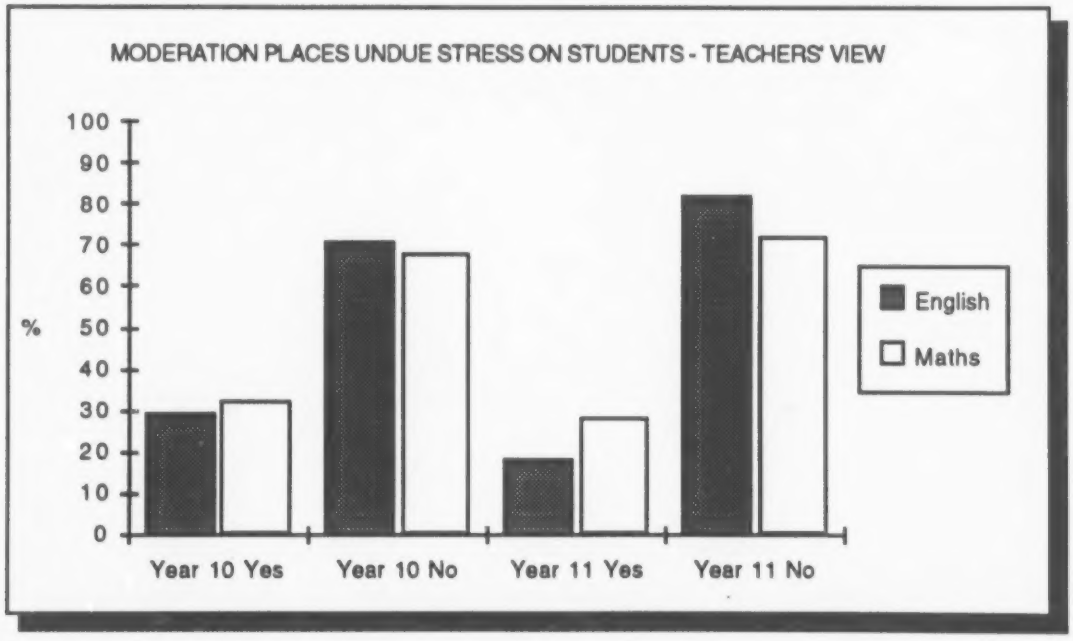
Restricts and inhibits the ability to digress and explore other ideas that may arise from the study of a unit.

It hinders lower level students as it dominates the type of work that has been done instead of basic literacy work.

Questions 18 and 19

Question 18 asked teachers if they felt moderation placed undue stress on their students and Question 19 asked them whether moderation caused undue stress to themselves. At both the Year 10 and Year 11 levels in both subjects, approximately 70% of teachers said they felt moderation did not place undue stress on their students. As far as stress on themselves was concerned, 72% of Year 10 Mathematics teachers and 61% of Year 11 Mathematics teachers said moderation caused them undue stress. For English, only 40% of Year 10 teachers and 38% of Year 11 teachers said English moderation caused them undue stress. Graphs 16 and 17 show this information. Comments as to why teachers felt moderation caused undue stress on themselves or their students are included after each graph.

Graph 16 Whether teachers thought moderation placed undue stress on students



The following reasons were given by English teachers who felt moderation places undue stress on their students:

Rather than enjoying learning the emphasis always comes back to the notion of getting marks and having a good folio.

Yes on some students. I have observed some students who are constantly told to get an outstanding piece of work into their folio react and then throw in the towel.

Students maintain that step from Year 10 to Year 11 it too severe.

Moderation causes stress for students with a non-English background and those transferring from interstate.

Moderation causes stress on the students who aren't clear about folio requirements.

It places stress more on students in the lower levels. They are there because they are less competent. There should be some alternative which moderates their progress.

Too much responsibility for Year 10 causes stress. They have too much paperwork and have difficulty meeting deadlines. Moderation is threatening to lower-level students and other moderated subjects add to the stress.

Some see moderation as an 'ogre' and dread the process of having to master all the genres.

The stress comes from having to do exercises that have no relation to other subjects. Writing stories etc while studying a novel becomes meaningless but it has to be done regardless.

The following reasons were given by Mathematics teachers who felt moderation places undue stress on their students:

Students are devastated if a poor piece of work must go in the folio. Part of assessment is for student feedback, however, much of this type still ends up in the folio.

SSC is valueless, students put more worth on the 'list' than on the year's work.

There is the burden of other subjects and exams. Students have no room to move. They can learn from mistakes but no time to do so. Moderation in all subjects is asking too much too soon.

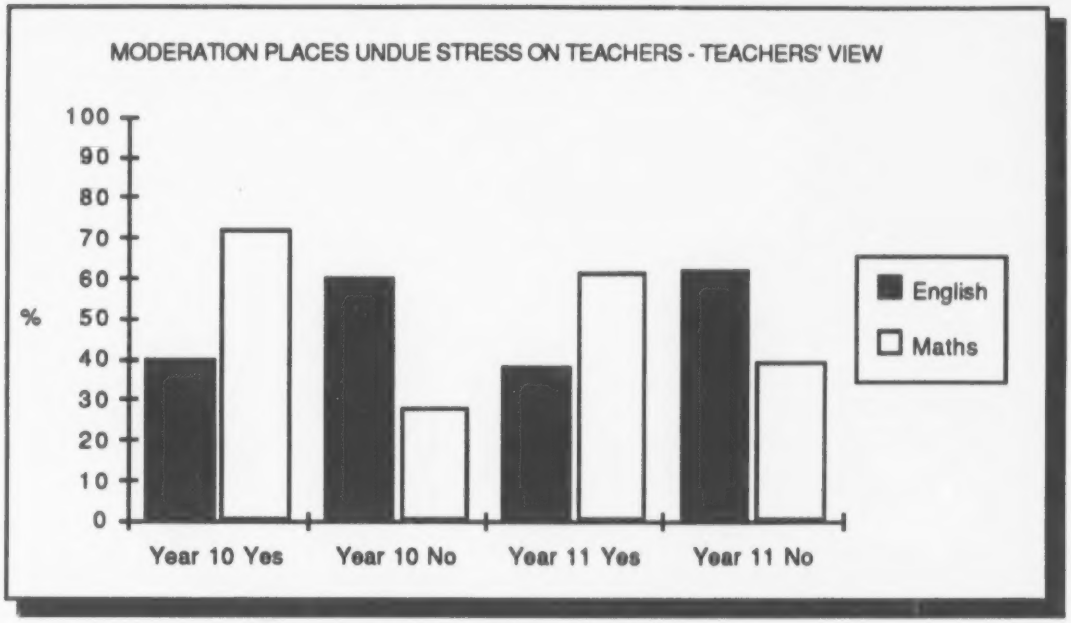
Those most affected are triers rather than brilliant.

Students panic at lost work. Why not moderate school curriculums?

Students are always working against a time limit rather than having time to master a topic before being tested.

Projects are very demanding on student time and input. I am concerned at the load we put on our students.

Graph 17 Whether teachers thought moderation placed undue stress on themselves



These comments are from English teachers:

You do not want to be seen to be letting the team down so you become obsessed with ensuring that all students are keeping work for their folios.

Too many meetings.

There is definitely a competitive strand which is unhealthy.

The job is to teach but there is more and more time being spent on paperwork. Chasing students for work causes stress.

Yes – but how can you get teachers organized.

Who is being moderated, the student or the teacher? It is up to the teacher to make sure folios are not bad, otherwise this is a reflection on the teacher.

Mathematics teachers made several comments as to the reasons moderation caused them stress. Below is a sample of their comments:

The workload keeps increasing particularly if more than one year level is moderated.

There is too much paperwork and deadlines to be met. The exams are too early.

The workload is greater on teachers teaching moderated subjects. Lighter teaching duties could help relieve this situation.

I have insufficient knowledge of the process, much more inservice is needed.

Moderation is a waste of time and energy. Why not rely on the exam as the sole moderation tool. Set out the topics and rely on teachers' ability to teach.

The responsibility of organising folios causes stress. Have only teacher's files moderated and more visits by the moderator.

I dislike being judged by others not qualified by experience to do so.

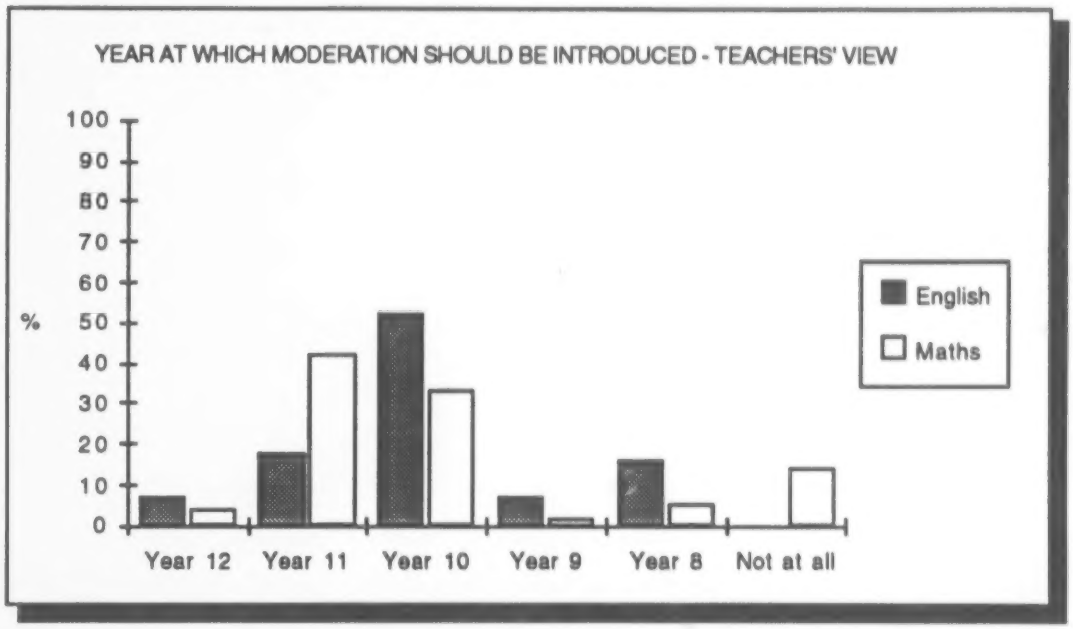
I find moderation stressful because I am a conservative traditionalist teacher, not very creative.

There is too much irrelevant paperwork with no contribution to teaching.

Question 20

Question 20 asked teachers at what level they felt moderation should be introduced and to provide reasons for their answer. With English, 52% of the teachers said moderation should be introduced at Year 10, 18% said Year 11, 7% said Year 12, 7% said Year 9 and 16% said Year 8. With Mathematics, 33% thought Year 10 an appropriate year level, 44% said Year 11 and 14% said there should be no moderation. Graph 18 shows information on this question in a pictorial form. Comments follow the graph.

Graph 18 The year level at which moderation should be introduced.



The following comments are from English teachers who felt moderation should be introduced at Year 10:

Students mature enough to take responsibility and make decisions.

Year 10, Year 8s and 9s are not mature enough to undergo moderation.

Year 10. This allows Years 8 and 9 more time for learning with less pressure.

Year 10. Students are better able to assume the responsibilities associated moderation at this age.

They are ready to focus more on the forms and styles of writing after junior years of modelling and production.

There would be too much work for teachers if other levels were involved.

Not before Year 10. Even at this stage students struggle to take responsibility for their own work.

Could be too much responsibility for younger children.

Year 10 as students can become familiar with the process before senior years.

If it is attempted earlier in this form the students may never receive enough learning to ever write formally and objectively.

This is when kids start leaving and it's a fair way of obtaining a grade indicative of their abilities. It is also good preparation for Years 11 and 12.

The following comments are from English teachers who felt moderation should be introduced at Year 11:

Introduce at Year 11 as the students at least have some commitment to their education.

Senior secondary only, where there are fewer subjects being undertaken by a student, and a student is doing subjects of his/her choice. There would seem to be more motivation at this level. Year 10 is too early.

Some teachers felt Year 12 was more appropriate for the introduction of moderation:

Year 12 or possibly second semester Year 11. Junior school should be left to learning social and academic skills and knowledge.

By this time the confidence and abilities of students are well established and they are just that little bit more aware and ready for this process.

The following comments are from Mathematics teachers who felt moderation should be introduced at Year 10:

Year 10 to ensure a common standard before Year 11.

Year 10 as this is the end of compulsory schooling.

Preparation for senior studies.

Students are mature enough to be challenged on responsibility for their work.

The following comments are from Mathematics teachers who felt moderation should be introduced at Year 11:

Year 11 as the Year 10 folios are not important.

Year 11 as Year 10 students have many other developmental tasks to do, they should be allowed to learn from mistakes.

The moderation process fits the nature of Year 11 courses, but not the Year 10 course. A more general approach is needed for Year 10.

Can see no reason for moderation earlier than Year 11.

Students do not leave at Year 10.

Year 11, moderation does not suit schools with vertical timetables.

Question 21

The last question on the questionnaire asked teachers to provide suggestions as to the process which could be used if moderation was extended to other subjects. Some teachers took this opportunity to say that they felt moderation should not be introduced to other subjects while other provided some interesting comments. A sample demonstrating the range of comments is provided below:

Please do not include research/investigations projects in every other subject. These are so demanding on students and lead to so much stress at home and in the classroom. Please set some end points in Science, throw out SACE [Social and Cultural Education] in favour of World Geography and let teachers plan their own way to achieving end points.

Crazy to get into folios below Year 11. As most students go on to Year 11 the JSSC is useless.

Folios to represent whole year's work instead of exams.

Consensus moderation has an inservice role and visitation provides a common element.

Modify the folio system so that the folio is a sample which verifies a grade awarded instead of the folio being the absolute basis for grading.

SACE [Social and Cultural Education] might follow similar lines to English.

Use to check consistency of standards only. Do not allow the process to become the central focus as appears to have happened in English. Introduce a simplified process.

Have meetings at the beginning and end of each course with 1 – 2 moderator visits for each unit. That would allow ample time for requirements to be met.

Every student should do the same tasks on the same topics.

Follow the English model which over the years has developed to be a streamlined process. Mini-consensus at Year 10 helps overcome huge numbers. Clear guidelines at meetings vital. Clear curriculum documents vital. Initial consensus necessary for new teachers. Moderators visit vital to provide back-up and help alleviate any problems.

A common agreed curriculum must first be established. This would then establish common tasks that can be moderated.

Meeting at the beginning of course, visit by moderator, then final consensus meeting.

Keep moderation paperwork to a minimum, external moderator visit more acceptable than consensus.

Set uniform assignments and ensure marking is uniform.

One which requires a minimum of teacher record keeping.

Make time allocation so teachers do not lose teaching time for moderation.

Use a process that moderates syllabus and assessment instruments within the school not moderation of student's work. This would eliminate vast amounts of administrivia (and save vast amounts of paper and filing cabinet space).

The following comments are from teachers who feel that moderation should not be extended to other subjects:

Don't extend to other subjects.

Send guidelines of standard and trust to teacher's professionalism.

Don't have external moderation. Introduce internal assessment within the school and still have an external exam.

Heaven forbid. Streamline it more, let the guidelines reflect an element of choice. Rigid prescription does not engender creativity. Let's get away from written work being the sole basis for assessment.

Just provide examples of work and grade allotted to it.

I suggest strongly that it is not extended. Professional development can be better achieved in other ways, but if it is extended I recommend the process be kept 'local' as much as possible e.g. visits to schools by moderators from others schools with professional development orientation as the major focus.

Who wants to compare the kids – may be more productive to spend the considerable $$$ on teacher inservicing.

SUMMARY

The majority of teachers who answered the questionnaires were well experienced and considered that they had a good understanding of the moderation process, especially in their individual subjects. Most of the teachers (over 70% of the English teachers and approximately 90% of the Mathematics teachers) said that teaching moderated subjects involved a greater workload than teaching non-moderated subjects. However, if given the choice to teach moderated or non-moderated subjects, the majority of English teachers (80% at Year 10 and 75% at Year 11) said they would prefer to teach moderated subjects while with the Mathematics teachers, 75% of Year 10 teachers said they would prefer to teach non-moderated Mathematics and 55% of the Year 11 Mathematics teachers said they would rather their subject be non-moderated. The reasons teachers gave for preferring to teach moderated subjects were that the moderation process allowed for professional development, produced comparable standards and was a fair assessment system. The main reasons given for preferring non-moderated subjects were that moderated subjects entail extra work, they are educationally limiting and they cause stress for teachers and students.

Questions 7 and 8 asked teachers what they saw as the benefits and problems associated with moderation. As mentioned, the aspects which teachers found most beneficial from the moderation process was that of professional development. The main problems teachers

encountered with moderation included the amount of clerical work involved, the time spent out of school at moderation meetings, getting students to adhere to folio requirements, and the interpretation of course requirements.

With the question of comparability of standards, 70% of English teachers thought that moderation helps achieve comparable standards while only 38% of the Mathematics teachers thought moderation was achieving comparable standards. A number of teachers, (25% of English teachers and 43% of Mathematics teachers) were uncertain as to whether moderation is achieving comparable standards across the Territory.

Questions 11 to 15 related to the student folios. Question 11 asked teachers whether they felt the student folio is a valid reflection of a student's ability. For English, 62% of teachers agreed that the folio reflects student ability as they felt the folio allowed for a wide range of student work to be included, 21% were uncertain and 17% did not agree. Some of the reasons for thinking the folio does not reflect a student's ability were that work requirements are too rigid and that the redrafting process inflates what students are really capable of. For Mathematics 49% agreed, 27% were uncertain and 24% disagreed. Of those who agreed, many felt that a file of assessments is better than a one-off examination. Some of the teachers who were uncertain as to whether the folio showed a student's ability or disagreed that it did, felt that it was restrictive and was not a better measure than exams.

Question 12 asked whether the teacher or student kept the folios during the year. Generally speaking, teachers of Year 10 kept the folios because at Year 10 the course ran for a full year and Year 10 students were more likely to lose folios, whereas at Year 11 the students kept the folios as they were considered to be more responsible and also because at Year 11 courses usually only run over one semester.

Questions 14 and 15 asked teachers how sure they were that the assignment work handed in by students for moderation was their own work. In general the English teachers did not see a problem with ownership while for Mathematics, half of the teachers said it was hard to detect if assignment work was not the student's own, but they felt this was not a problem as there was adequate check on student's performance with other measures such as tests.

Questions 16 and 17 asked teachers in what ways moderation promoted or inhibited student learning. The main reasons teachers saw for moderation promoting student learning were as motivation, gaining organisational skills, forcing them to meet deadlines and indirectly through improving teaching. They felt moderation inhibits learning because it does not allow students time for extension work, there is too much emphasis on assessment causing students to think this is all school is about, it causes stress, and it hinders lower ability students because there is no time to spend on basic literacy work. Some teachers felt that moderation neither promotes or inhibits student learning.

With the question of stress, approximately 70% felt that moderation did not cause undue stress for their students. However, for themselves, 70% of the Year 10 teachers Mathematics and 61% of the Year 11 Mathematics teachers said moderation caused them undue stress. With English, approximately 40% of the teachers said moderation caused them undue stress. Some of the causes of teacher stress appeared to be the extra workload associated with moderation, the number of meetings, the amount of paperwork required, organising students to meet deadlines and the responsibility of making sure student folios are presentable.

Questions 20 and 21 related to the introduction and extension of moderation to other subjects. Although the question of whether moderation should be extended to other subjects was not asked directly there were a number of comments which indicated teachers did not want moderation extended. In answer to the question of the appropriate year level to introduce moderation 52% of the English teachers who answered the question said Year 10 as they felt students were old enough to take on the responsibility and it was good practice for Years 11 and 12, 18% said Year 11 because they felt students have more commitment to

their education, with smaller numbers saying Year 12 or Year 8 or Year 9. With Mathematics 33% said Year 10 as they felt it was good preparation for senior studies and that it ensured a common standard before students entered senior secondary, 44% said Year 11 as they felt the process was more suited to the nature of Year 11 courses and that students did not leave at the end of Year 10. A few said other year levels and 14% said not to introduce it at all. As to suggestions for the process which could be used, several comments said the folios should be simplified, others suggested curriculum and assessment instruments should be moderated rather than students' work, while a couple of comments indicated that clear curriculum documents and guidelines about moderation should be in place before moderation was introduced.

6 VIEWS OF STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

To obtain responses from a sample of students throughout the Northern Territory, contact was made with each school/college and subject seniors asked to select classes in which to administer questionnaires. The seniors were asked to select one English class and one Mathematics class which included students of varying abilities or in larger schools to select two classes in each subject with students of varying abilities. The size and the type of the school determined the number of questionnaires sent to the school for administration by classroom teachers or the number administered by the evaluator during visits to schools. A total of 274 Year 10 students from thirteen different schools/colleges completed questionnaires and 177 Year 11 students from seven schools/colleges completed questionnaires. All types of schools, i.e. comprehensive high schools (Years 8–12), high schools (Years 8–10), secondary colleges (Years 11 and 12), and area schools (Transition–Year 12), both government and non-government, were represented.

The aim of this questionnaire was to get students' views on the moderation process. The questionnaire covered topics such as: the students' knowledge and understanding of the moderation process; whether they had been provided with an outline of work requirements for both English and Mathematics; whether they knew how their work would be assessed and how important it was for them to know what was expected in each subject. They were also asked: whether they themselves kept their folios or whether the teacher kept their work; whether they found it difficult to complete work; whether the work that went into folios represented the full range of class activities; what they saw as the benefits and drawbacks of moderation; and whether they felt moderation should be extended to other subjects.

FINDINGS

Questions 1 and 2

Questions 1 and 2 asked students if they had an outline of work requirements for each subject and whether they knew how their work would be assessed. At the Year 10 level in English 94% of the 256 students who answered this question said they had an outline of work requirements with 88% indicating that they knew how their work would be assessed. For Mathematics the percentages were less, with 71% saying they had an outline of work and 72% saying they knew how their work would be assessed. Figures were similar for Year 11, with 93% of the 177 students who answered the questions concerning English saying they had an outline of work and 90% indicating that they knew how their work would be assessed. In Mathematics 77% of the 145 who answered the question knew their work requirements and 80% said they knew how their work would be assessed. Tables 10 and 11 give a summary of this information.

Table 10 Whether students have an outline of work requirements

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	241 (94%)	15 (6%)	256	165 (93%)	12 (7%)	177
Maths	160 (71%)	65 (29%)	225	112 (77%)	33 (23%)	145

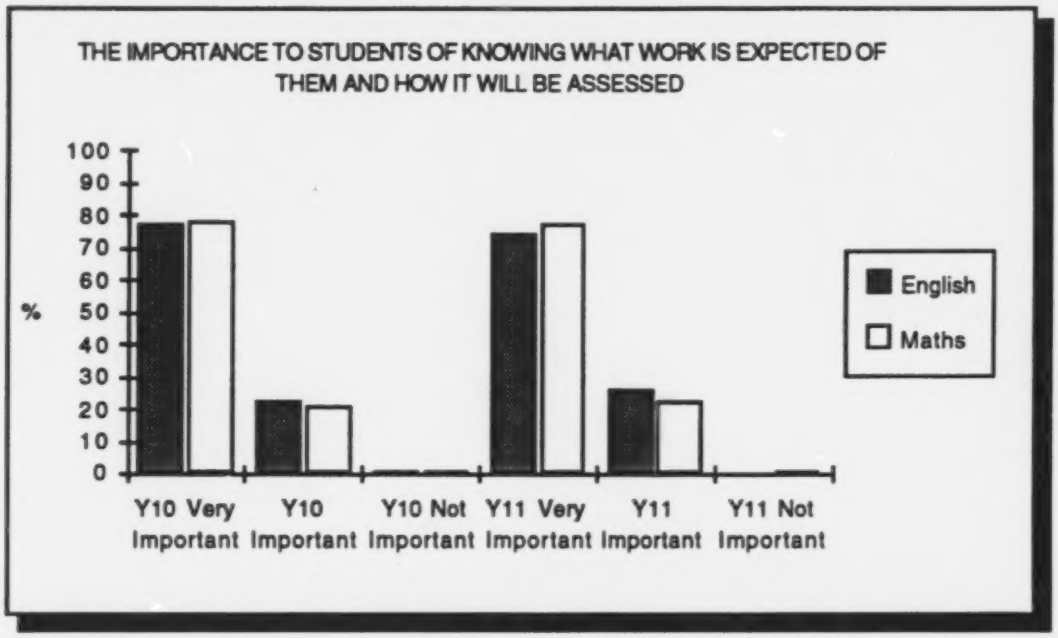
Table 11 Whether students know how their work will be assessed

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	227 (88%)	31 (12%)	258	160 (90%)	18 (10%)	178
Maths	161 (72%)	63 (28%)	225	112 (77%)	33 (23%)	145

Question 3

Question 3 asked students how important it is for them to know what work they are expected to do and how this work will be assessed. They were asked to answer this question on a three point scale of 'very important', 'important' and 'not important' for each of the two subjects, English and Mathematics. For both subjects, at both year levels, 99% of students felt it important or very important that they be informed of what work they would be required to do and how it would be assessed. Graph 19 gives a summary of this information.

Graph 19 The importance of knowing what work is expected and how it will be assessed



Question 4

Question 4 asked students whether they had come across the term 'moderation'. A greater number of students reported they had come across the term in regard to English, with fewer reporting they had come across the term in Mathematics. At the Year 10 level in English 86% of students reported that they had come across the term while the figure was 76% for Mathematics. Fourteen per cent of students did not give an answer for this question with regards to Mathematics while only 3% did not give an answer for English. At Year 11, the figures in answer to Question 4 were 94% for English and 77% for Mathematics. Table 12 is a summary of this information.

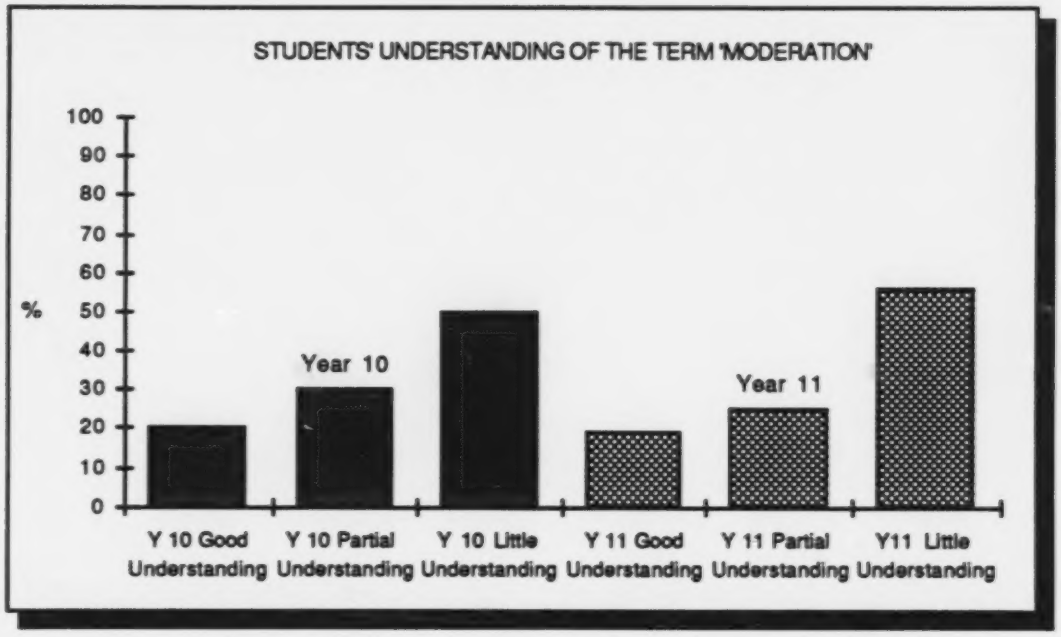
Table 12 Whether students had come across the term 'moderation'

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	222 (86%)	36 (14%)	258	168 (94%)	10 (6%)	178
Maths	170 (76%)	54 (24%)	224	110 (77%)	33 (23%)	143

Question 5

Question 5 asked students to explain what they understood by the term 'moderation'. As the answers ranged from students who had a good understanding to those who had little understanding, the information was analysed into three categories. There were many students (25% of the Year 10 students and 20% of the Year 11 students) who did not answer this question. At the Year 10 level, 20% of students understood the term 'moderation', 30% had partial understanding and 50% had very little understanding. The figures were similar for Year 11 with 18% with a good understanding, 26% with partial understanding and 56% with little understanding as shown in Graph 20. To demonstrate the range of answers to this question, from those who had little understanding of the term to those considered to have a good understanding, a sample of comments is provided after the graph.

Graph 20 Students' understanding of the term 'moderation'



The following comments have been arranged to show the degree of understanding of the term ranging from 'little understanding' to a 'good understanding':

You get moderated on your folio.

Some special people come from Darwin (Moderators) and mark your work.

Assessment of the year's work for JSSC.

Where the work you have done is looked at by people (not from your school) and give you a grade.

An exam used to decide whether or not you can pass Year 10.

Someone apart from your teacher is marking it.

Moderation means to put all your work in a folder, your best work and it is moderated or graded by many teachers and the final grade is decided.

Bringing all assessment marks together to find out a set standard.
An external marking system where work from different schools is compared and marks allocated.

Your marks are reassessed by other teachers so you are not marked too hard or too easy. You get the mark you deserve.

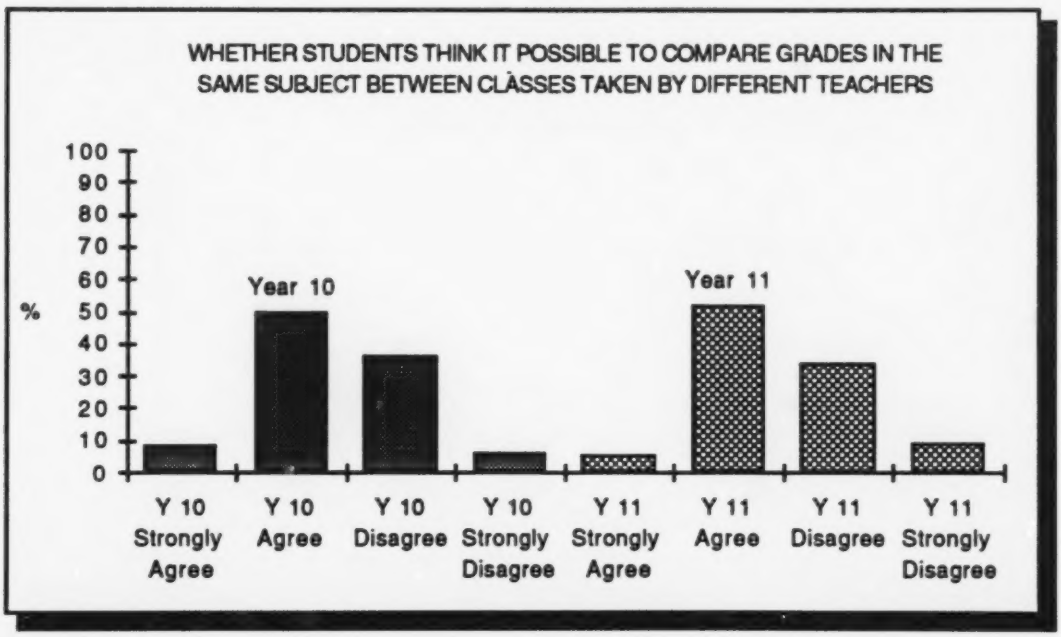
The moderator goes through your work to see if the grade you have been given is fair, and also to compare your work with other schools. Also to make sure that the way teachers are marking the work is not too harsh or easy.

Being assessed fairly and comparatively to other students so that you know that the mark received is the real standard you have achieved. It is different schools comparing their students work and marking strategies.

Question 6

Question 6 asked students if they thought it possible to compare individual grades in the same subject between classes taken by different teachers. They were asked to give an answer on a four point scale ranging through 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' to 'strongly disagree'. At the Year 10 level, 58% agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible to compare grades, while 42% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The figures for Year 11 were similar with 57% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 43% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Graph 21 shows the distribution of students' answers for this question.

Graph 21 Whether students think it possible to compare grades



Question 7

Question 7 asked whether teachers had explained what pieces of work are required in the 'folio'. As will be seen from the following summary there is a difference between the

answers given for Mathematics and those given for English. This difference may be due to the fact that terminology for the two subjects varies. In English students are required to place their work in a 'folio' while for Mathematics the work is placed in an 'assessment file'. Table 13 provides a summary of this information.

Table 13 Whether teachers have explained what pieces of work are to go in the folio

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	247 (96%)	10 (4%)	257	165 (92%)	14 (8%)	179
Maths	116 (51%)	110 (49%)	226	47 (36%)	82 (64%)	129

Questions 8 and 9

Question 8 asked students whether the 'folio' represents the full range of class activities and Question 9 then asked students who answered 'no' to Question 8 to suggest other activities that they felt should be included in the folio. Table 14 provides a summary of the answers for Question 8 followed by some examples of students' suggestions from Question 9.

Table 14 Whether the 'folio' represents the full range of class activities

SUBJECT	Year 10 Yes	Year 10 No	Total Year 10	Year 11 Yes	Year 11 No	Total Year 11
English	198 (77%)	60 (23%)	258	132 (77%)	39 (23%)	171
Maths	140 (64%)	79 (36%)	216	74 (57%)	56 (43%)	130

A number of students felt that oral work should receive more attention and suggested the following:

Oral work should count for more.

Speech activities e.g. debate, public address.

Recordings and videotapes of speeches.

A cassette of a speech you did.

There is no way you can show moderators how you work out of class on an excursion or in a debating room, you can't put that in your folio. English is not only writing essays.

More oral work and reading logs, excursions and assignments.

Others suggested that reports on excursions, class tests, drama etc, should be included. The following comments indicate this:

Excursions and drama.

Book reviews, excursions, plays.

Poetry, drama, excursions.

Assignments and excursions.

Reports of extension activities e.g. excursions.

Others suggested reducing expository writings:

Debating, class tests, reduce expository writings.

Less expository work.

Other comments were:

Only one example of each genre allowed.

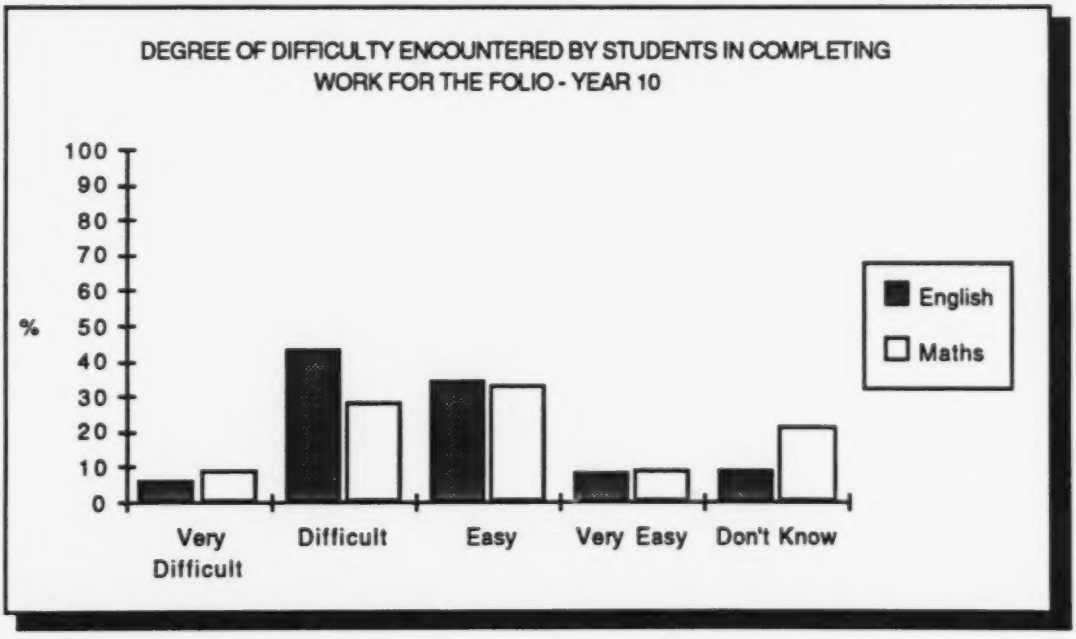
Personal journals.

Own stories.

Question 10

Question 10 asked students to rate, on a five-point scale, the degree of difficulty they encounter in completing work requirements. The scale ranged through 'very difficult', 'difficult', 'easy', 'very easy' and 'don't know'. Only a small percentage of students in both Year 10 and Year 11 said completing the work was very difficult or very easy, however, there were approximately equal numbers who said completing the work was either difficult or easy. For Year 10, 43% and 28% respectively for English and Mathematics said completing the work was difficult and 34% and 33% respectively said it was easy. At Year 11, 34% said completing work for the English folio was difficult while 39% said it was easy and for Mathematics 25% said it was difficult while 38% said it was easy. Part two of this question asked students to provide reasons for their choice of answer. Graph 22 provides a view of the answers from Year 10 students and Graph 23 summarises the information provided by Year 11 students. A sample of comments on why students, at each year level for each subject, found the work difficult or easy to complete is provided after each graph.

Graph 22 Difficulty encountered by Year 10 students in completing work for the folio



Reasons identified by students for considering English easy to complete were: they knew what was expected of them, much of the work was normal classwork, they were given dates for completion of work, and the teacher provided help. The following comments are a sample of Year 10 students' reasons for considering English is easy or very easy:

I know exactly what is expected.

It is all set out and you know what you have to do.

English – we know exactly what we have to do and when it has to be done.

Work is not hard, can be done in class with help of students and teacher.

English – it is very easy for me because it is normal class work and it has to be done to pass anyway. Transferring it into the folio is not a problem.

English is easy, just a matter of completing the work.

We have enough time and the teacher is always available for help.

I like English, I find it easy and my teacher helps me a lot.

Planning – If the teacher sets me an assignment and sets a date, I can have it completed before that.

English – I find most of the pieces easy to do because our teacher will help us if we need help and there is often a set date.

The following comments are a sample of Year 10 students' reasons for considering Mathematics easy or very easy to complete:

Mathematics – enough time to complete work.

Most of the items are tests which are done in class.

Maths is fairly easy because our exams are put into the folio.

Maths – know exactly what is required.

Maths – all of the work done in class goes into the folio. In English most of the work we do for the folio has to be done at home.

Maths is either right or wrong. English – depends whether teachers like the topic you write about e.g. they will mark you down for a horror story.

Maths – you don't have to complete that much extra work for folio. English – more work.

Know exactly what is expected.

Because our teachers keep our folios and place any necessary work in it when completed.

Reasons identified by students for considering English difficult were: the limited time to complete assignments, that it has not been explained well, there is too much time spent on redrafting pieces and that some of the work is difficult. The following comments are a

sample of Year 10 students' reasons for considering English difficult or very difficult to complete:

Limited time and assignments are hard.

I find completing work on time difficult and always have to rush it.

English – time insufficient to complete all of the work.

English – I don't know how to do the different styles of writing.

Teacher doesn't explain it well.

Some trouble in understanding some areas.

Did not understand requirement, too demanding, excludes some of our best work.

In English we have set times to complete assignments, it seems a little harder to organise time and get my work done early.

In English there is too much time on redrafting.

English – difficult to get the work done because I am a slow reader.

English is hard because I don't like reading.

English – I find it difficult to keep all the work especially from first term.

It is very difficult because you have so much work in other subjects as well as Maths and English.

The following comments are a sample of Year 10 students' reasons for considering Mathematics difficult or very difficult to complete:

English is explained well, Maths gets little explanation.

Some of the work I can't understand. It is not explained well.

Limited time to complete work. The assignments are hard.

Mathematics – we are supposed to have assignments in our folios, yet we have not been given an assignment.

Maths – you don't get a choice of what goes in your folio.

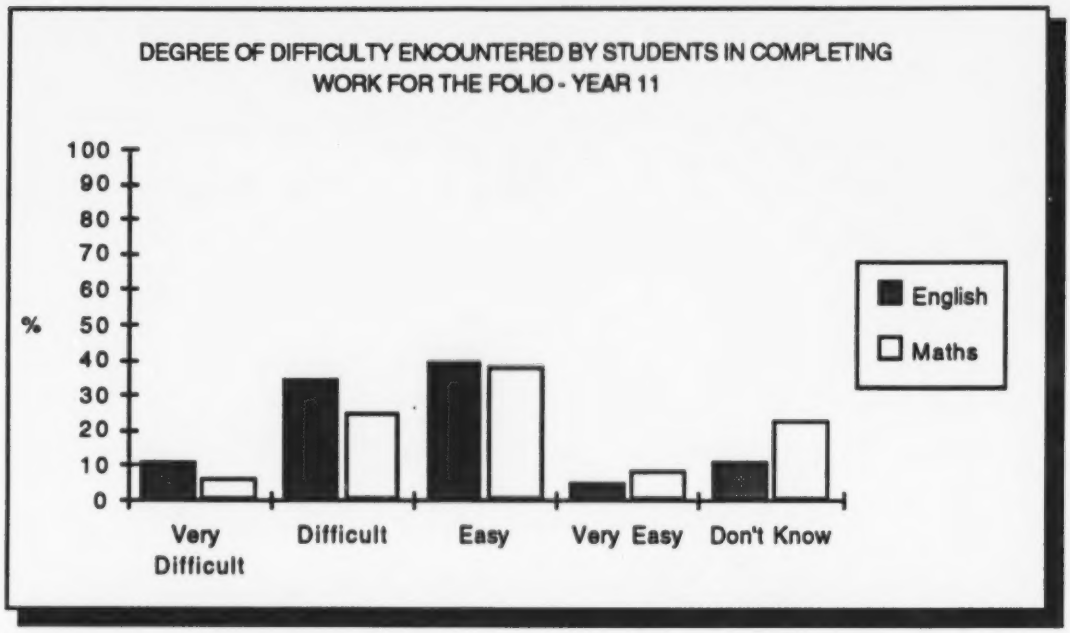
Maths – you must get good marks in tests and assignments for a reasonable mark.

I find English easy to complete because most of the time I keep everything up to date. Maths I find hard to complete because some of the topics are hard to understand.

Maths – difficult to complete the work that is expected because I don't know what is expected.

We haven't been told the requirements for our Maths folios.

Graph 23 Difficulty encountered by Year 11 students in completing work for the folio.



The following comments, which revolve around knowing what is required, knowing the due dates and keeping up with work, are a sample of Year 11 students' reasons for considering English to be easy or very easy to complete:

The work requirements are known.

You just have to keep up and complete and hand in your work on time and do the best you can do.

Very easy if you know what you are doing.

Completing work for the folio is not a problem if you plan and are consistent in doing the work when it is given.

One knows what is needed.

Always enough time given to complete.

Due dates are given.

The following comments, which relate mainly to time limitations, the amount of work required and redrafting work, are a sample of Year 11 students' reasons for considering English to be difficult or very difficult to complete:

A lot of work required for the time allowed.

Too much pressure to get work completed on time.

Too much rush – not enough knowledge of what is required.

Hard to keep up with standards with other deadlines to meet.

It is always difficult to get things done in time. I never know when to stop swapping and changing words until I don't have enough time left.

Not enough time. Moderation causes pressure on students and teachers.

There is a lot of work to complete.

Re-writing pieces to get a better mark.

Many of the Year 11 Mathematics students felt that Mathematics was a straightforward subject and was easy to complete if work was completed when given. The following comments are a sample of Year 11 students' reasons for considering Mathematics easy or very easy to complete:

Not so much work to do, no problems.

Mathematics is straightforward.

Able to complete the work easily.

Plenty of time to complete.

Okay if you do the work when set.

If you keep up to date with work requirements it is relatively easy.

If you do your work on time there isn't any hassle.

The following comments, which appear to relate mainly to students not understanding work requirements, are a sample of Year 11 students' reasons for considering Mathematics difficult or very difficult to complete:

Don't understand the work.

Requirements not known.

Maths is difficult because you have to keep all tests.

Don't know the work.

Moderation places stress on students and teachers.

Question 11

Question 11 asked students whether they themselves kept their folios or whether their teachers kept their folios in each of the two subjects. Table 6 indicates that at the Year 10 level approximately half of the students said that they themselves kept their English folios while the other half said their teachers kept their English folios. This varied somewhat from the teachers' answers for this question with 73% of Year 10 English teachers saying they kept the folios for their students. For Year 10 Mathematics, 77% of the students who answered this question said their teachers kept their folios (84% of the teachers who answered questionnaires said they kept students' folios). Of the total number of Year 10 students who returned questionnaires, 19% did not answer this question with regard to Mathematics while for English only 4% did not answer the question. As discussed with Question 7, students may have been confused with this question as in Mathematics the 'folios' are referred to as 'assessment files' in Year 10.

At the Year 11 level, 63% of students said they were responsible for keeping their English folios while 61% said they kept their Mathematics folios. These figures were similar to those provided by teachers for this question. Twenty-nine per cent of Year 11 students who returned questionnaires did not answer this question with regard to Mathematics while only 5% did not answer it for English. From discussions with the Mathematics Moderator, it appears there is less emphasis on keeping set pieces of work in a Mathematics folio or assessment file at Year 11, unlike the more stringent requirements for the Year 11 English folio. Table 15 provides a summary of the information discussed above.

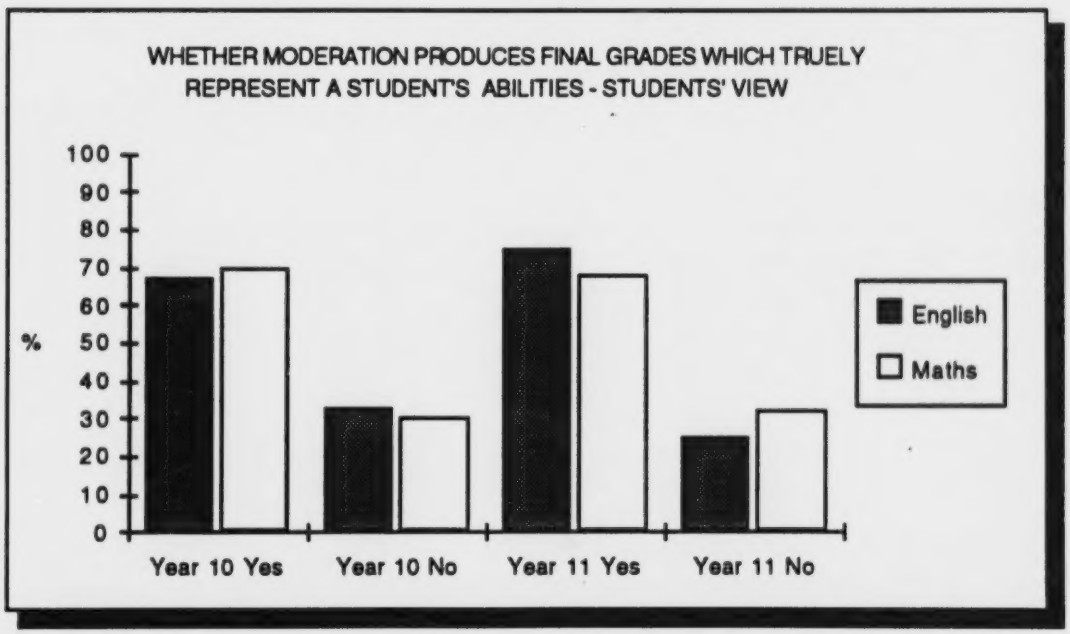
Table 15 Whether the students or the teachers keep folios

SUBJECT	Y 10 Teacher	Y 10 Student	Total Year 10	Y 11 Teacher	Y 11 Student	Total Year 11
English	142 (55%)	114 (45%)	256	63 (37%)	106 (63%)	169
Maths	165 (77%)	48 (23%)	213	41 (39%)	65 (61%)	106

Question 12

Question 12 asked students whether they believed the moderation process assists in obtaining final grades which truly represent their abilities. Of the 205 Year 10 students who answered this question concerning English 67% thought that the moderation process assisted in showing their true abilities. At Year 11, 126 students answered the question with 75% saying yes, they thought moderation helped produce grades which were representative of their abilities. Fewer students answered Question 12 regarding Mathematics, with 70% of Year 10 students and 68% of Year 11 students saying moderation was of assistance in producing grades which truly represented their abilities. Graph 24 gives a pictorial representation of this information.

Graph 24 Whether moderation produces final grades which truly represent abilities



Question 13

Question 13 asked students what they see as the positive aspects of moderation. At the Year 10 level, 57% of students offered a comment and with Year 11, 46% of the students gave a comment. The main focus of students' comments was that moderation was a fair system of marking which is depicted in the following comments:

Moderators are not likely to be biased.

Fairly marked against other students.

Fair way to assess.

Different people mark the final work.

Evens out teacher marking.

Moderation stops easy markers, you get the mark you deserve.

We are given a grade teachers around the state agree on.

English – You can present your best pieces. Maths – if you get a good mark you will get a higher grade.

It's fair. If you go badly in the exam you have the folio mark to back you up.

You could get a mark that is fair and of equal standard throughout the Territory.

Other students felt that a positive aspects of moderation was the comparison with other schools and students' work as is shown by the following comments:

Our best work is looked at and can be compared to other students from other schools. Maths – our ability to perform under pressure situations e.g. tests, exams are highlighted in our folios.

It allows comparison with other students and unbiased marking.

Gives comparison between classes, thus also stops cheating.

If you have a bad grade you might have it changed. You find out how good you are amongst different schools.

I know how I compare with other students. It gives you a good sense of achievement when you finish a section and do well.

Shows what level you are at compared to other students.

You get to write different pieces in different formats. Your mark is graded in accordance with other schools.

The fact that moderation allows a mark based on a whole semester or whole year's work and not solely on a test was seen as another positive aspects of moderation:

Marks based on year's work, not just exam.

You are able to show what you have been doing all year and the progress that you have made.

All your work can be presented and if you don't do well in your test you can still do well.

Collection of your best work. In Maths it shows your test work and how well you are doing.

Allows people to see a range of work, not like exams. It shows work under different conditions like in tests or assignments or investigations.

Other comments concerning the positive aspects of moderation included:

Brings up the level of education.

English – helps you to study for exams – you know what the moderators want and what quality they expect.

Tests ability to write under pressure.

Question 14

Question 14 asked students to list the drawbacks of moderation. Forty-three per cent of Year 10 students gave comments and 34% of Year 11 students. The main drawbacks identified were the pressure to complete the folio, that the folio does not show how much help has been received, and the fact that in English, if a piece of work is missing from the folio students fail the course. The following comments are a sample of those offered by Year 10 students:

The pressure of completing folios.

Hassle for teachers and students. Doesn't show effort.

Teachers rush and try to teach everything.

Lot of pressure on kids. Should be explained more.

Having to strive to be perfect with all your work. It seems too much to bother about. It becomes the only thing you think about.

If you lose some work then you fail. It puts a lot of pressure on students. It gets confusing – that someone can fail because of their presentation i.e their handwriting.

Missing pieces of work means our whole folio fails.

Something missing from the folio, an 'E' is given.

English – if you lose your folio or some of your work, your mark could be worse.

Doesn't say how much help one has.

All work is polished therefore when working, people think we could do it like that all the time.

Some of the other drawbacks mentioned were:

The people who mark your work don't know you – can't tell if you are lazy or bad at Maths but really try.

It is very stressful and does not show your full capacity, like how hard a student tries in doing the subject.

Teachers from other schools would not be aware of our abilities to participate in oral activities which are not recorded in our folios.

Your Term 4 work doesn't get submitted for a mark.

Maths – you have to put all work in you folio and not just your best pieces as with English.

No oral work included.

Year 11 students made similar comments to those of Year 10:

Can take place at a stressful time of year.

Too much pressure.

Stress. It is always a rush having a lot of deadlines to meet.

Downgrading of marks is very discouraging.

The time it takes and the due dates etc. The effort moderators and teachers have to put into it.

Sometimes they expect too much and they can't see how much hard work and effort has gone into it.

People can work hard all year getting a consistent 'C', whereas others only work hard for moderation and get a B or an A.

Moderated subjects may be too hard, there is too much pressure on producing all work. Teacher should explain at the beginning of the year, all you will need to keep.

Question 15

Question 15 asked students what could be done to improve moderation. As with Questions 13 and 14 only a small percentage of students offered answers. The following comments, which mainly suggest giving less work to students and greater explanation of what is required, are examples of answers to Question 15:

If you don't have everything in you fail. Just put five pieces of your own choice.

English – be given more information.

Moderators should come and see the class.

The amount of work and the pressure. Improve moderation by not putting so much pressure on students.

A lot of work. Only have it in English but have a Maths external exam and leave out the folio for Maths.

Too much work for the amount of time you have. Improve moderation by having less work or more time to complete the work.

Moderators should meet students. All assignments and work plans to be set at beginning of year.

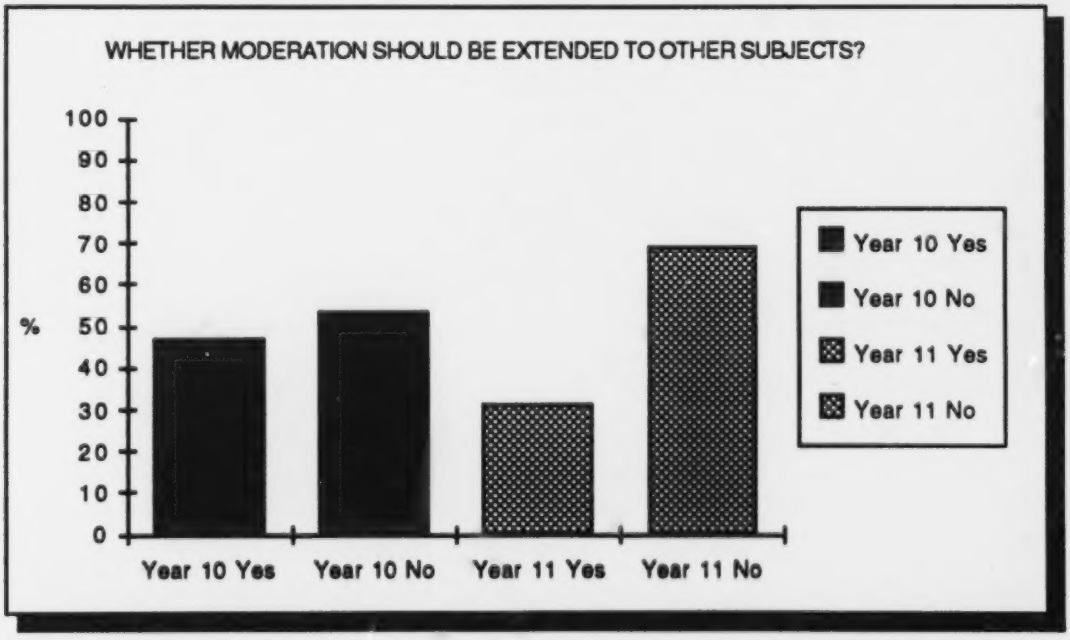
Maths – get told about it in the first place. I find Maths moderation scary because I am not properly aware of the expectations.

Question 16

Question 16 asked students whether they thought moderation should be extended to other subjects and then to provide reasons for their answer. If students thought moderation should be extended they were asked to suggest what subjects it should include. Samples of answers given to this question are provided after Graph 25.

At the Year 10 level 53% of the students who answered this question thought that moderation should not be extended to other subjects, whereas 47% thought it should. At the Year 11 level 69% of students said that moderation should not be extended to other subjects, with only 31% of Year 11 students saying that it should be extended. Graph 25 shows this information.

Graph 25 Whether moderation should be extended to other subjects



The following comments are a sample from the 53% of students who said they thought moderation should not be extended to other subjects. The main reasons provided for not extending moderation to other subjects were: that English and Mathematics are seen as

important subjects and that two moderated subjects is enough, and the fear of greater pressure and the extra workload if moderation were extended.

I don't agree with it as it puts pressure on already pressured people. The pressure to pass Year 10 period, is enough pressure already without giving more moderation.

Too much pressure would be placed on students and this may have bad effects on them psychologically.

With other subjects moderated you wouldn't have enough time to do them all properly.

No. Because we are already only 14–15 years old and the amount of stress moderation causes for many is just too much. If you did extend moderation I think many students would be scared away from continuing school and some might even resort to such things as committing suicide. Can't you just let us have a bit of fun in our last year of junior high and enable us to grow up in our own way.

Too much work would really make moderation unpleasant and even discourage people from going on to Years 11 and 12. I think the exams and folios for moderation should be in Term 4 because what you learn in Term 4 after moderation can't help you achieve anything.

I don't think that too many subjects should be moderated because moderation is seen as something really nerve-racking and I believe it would put too much pressure on the students.

No, because a student doesn't need extra pressure from so many different subjects with moderation. People will start having nervous breakdowns at the age of 15 or 16 years of age.

I think English and Maths is enough, otherwise you will be getting overloaded with work requirements.

English & Maths are the most important subjects.

Two moderated subjects is enough.

Other comments against introducing moderation to other subjects included:

Don't have it, should definitely not go to other subjects.

Only marked on your best, not everything you do. Don't have moderation.

If you are going to have it, have it all the way from Year 8 so we can get used to the idea and not get so worried about it. Maths – be told about it so that we fully understand the procedure.

Improve moderation – teachers keep the folios so that they don't get lost. Do not extend moderation because it would mean organising too many folders and would cause stress.

Some of the work done in some subjects is not suited for moderation.

Of the 95 students (47% of those who returned questionnaires) who answered this question 34% thought moderation should be extended to Science and SACE, 20% suggested it only be extended to Science while 9% said SACE only. One or two students suggested moderation should be extended to other subjects such as Languages, Technical Studies, Art, Computer Education and Business Studies. Two students suggested moderation could be extended to all subjects while one suggested Sport and Religion should be moderated.

The following comments provide reasons why students felt moderation should be extended to other subjects, especially Social and Cultural Education (SACE) and Science:

All subjects to ensure comparabilty.

Extend moderation to SACE and Science as these are two other main subjects and some schools may not teach the same as other schools so students suffer in Year 11 and 12. I think moderation should be kept but exams be scrapped.

SACE, Science. These are important subjects. Students should be able to choose a subject and do a folio on that topic i.e. out of SACE, Science, Maths and English.

SACE. Gives you something to work for and it's fair.

SACE, Science – are important and a teacher who marks too hard may deprive someone of continuing on with their education. A good way to assess our school work.

Science – major compulsory subject. A mark for science on the JSSC would be good.

SACE, Science. It really makes you try as hard as you can and give a high standard of work. It also gives you a good overall view of how you compare to other students.

Science. To know that it doesn't matter what school you go to you will still be learning the same information.

The following comments provide reasons why Year 11 students felt moderation should not be extended to other subjects:

Too much work organising folio.

Doesn't show real standard of work.

Base grade on classwork, no need for moderation.

Because it's not working now so why stuff up other subjects.

Too much pressure and strain on students to complete work loads. The two subjects (Maths and English) I feel are the most important are the only ones necessary to moderate.

Drop it and return to external exam, that says whether you pass or not.

Year 11 students listed a range of subjects which they felt should be moderated. These included Chemistry, Physics, Art, Technical Studies, Home Economics, Computer Science, Physical Education, Languages, Economics, Legal Studies, Welding and Fabrication. The

following is a sample of comments with reasons Year 11 students gave for extending moderation to other subjects:

So people don't cheat.

Moderate all subjects and have no exams.

Get the moderator to say how work can be improved.

The moderation process allows students to show improvement.

Moderation is a fairer system of assessment

SUMMARY

Year 11 students appeared to have a better understanding of the moderation process than Year 10 in both English and Mathematics. Over 90% of Year 11 students reported they had outlines of the work required for both subjects. At Year 10, most students had received an outline of the work required for English with slightly fewer students saying they had work outlines for Mathematics.

Most students had an idea of how their work would be assessed and thought it important that they know how it will be assessed. Fewer students said they had come across the term 'moderation' in Mathematics while a greater percentage had come across the term in English. Ninety-four per cent of the Year 11 English students said they knew the term while 77% of the Mathematics students knew the term. Approximately half of the Year 10 students and half of Year 11 were able to provide an answer which indicated they had a reasonable understanding of moderation while the other half of the students who answered this question showed they had little understanding of the term.

With Question 7, which asked students whether teachers had explained what pieces of work were required for the 'folio', there appeared to be a large difference between Mathematics and English, with most of the English students at both Year 10 and Year 11 knowing what was involved while for Mathematics approximately half of the students did not know what was supposed to go in their folio. This could be due to the fact that the terminology is different in that for Mathematics the term 'assessment file' and not 'folio' is used or it could be due to the fact that assessment differs between the two subjects and teachers simply collect class exercises and tests completed during Mathematics classes and place them in the 'assessment file' while English students are required to produce set pieces and place these in their folios themselves. For English, 55% of Year 10 students and 63% of Year 11 students said they kept their own folios, while for Mathematics at Year 10 only 23% said they kept their folios. At Year 11 Mathematics, 61% of students kept their own folios.

Just over half of the students thought it possible to compare grades in the same subjects taken by different teachers, the other half thought that it was not possible. Approximately 70% of students felt that the moderation process produced final grades which represented their true abilities. Over 75% of English students felt that the folios represented the full range of class activities but felt that oral work should count for more, while for Mathematics approximately 60% said the folio represented their full range of class activities. The Mathematics figures might be slightly lower because the Mathematics students did not fully understand the term 'folio'.

Approximately half of the students said they found it hard to complete the work for the folios whereas the other half found it relatively easy. A slightly greater number of Mathematics students found completing Mathematics work was easier than completing tasks for English.

Students were asked to list the positive and negative aspects of moderation. Students felt that moderation is a fair system of assessment, provides a standard and allows for comparison with other students and schools. Some of the drawbacks of moderation, the majority of which related to English, were: the pressure students are placed under in getting folios up to date; that the final product after redrafting does not show a student's true ability; and that if one piece of work is lost they fail. With Mathematics, one of the drawbacks was that everything was put into the folio and students did not have a choice. Some of the suggestions from students to improve moderation were to reduce the number of pieces necessary for the English folio, receive more explanation of the process and the work requirements and have moderators visit students in class. At Year 10, 53% of students thought that moderation should not be extended to other subjects while 69% of Year 11 students thought it should not. Their reason for not extending it was that there is more than enough work with the current moderation of Mathematics and English. Of those who did feel moderation should be extended to other subjects, the most popular choices were Science and Social and Cultural Education (SACE).

7 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Major findings emerging from the study were that the majority of personnel involved with moderation were in favour of the current approaches being employed for Mathematics and English at Years 10 and 11. Positive aspects identified were that the process contributes to teachers' professional development, promotes comparable standards, contributes to student learning, provides schools with structured methodology for teaching and assessing these subjects and provides an avenue for advisory visits. The moderators and assistant moderators felt that levels of achievement have risen over time and that students and teachers have benefited from common standards and expectations. Negative aspects of the current scheme were that moderation procedures placed a greater workload on teachers and students, which for some was seen as the cause of undue stress. Administrators faced problems with moderation meetings because of the number of teachers involved and the amount of school time teachers required. Assistant moderators were also pressured during peak times. It was felt the workload for assistant moderators was extremely demanding, especially in English, where the need for an additional assistant moderator was suggested.

Various aspects relating to moderation procedures were investigated. These will be discussed briefly in this chapter and those which appear to require further consideration will be highlighted as issues.

To gauge the degree of understanding of the moderation process, school administrators, teachers and students were asked several questions related to this topic. It appears that those teachers directly involved with the moderation process have a good understanding of moderation. Most of the school administrators felt they understood moderation and most schools made an attempt to impart knowledge about the process to new teachers, and parents. Many students, however, did not appear to have a good understanding of what moderation meant. Over half of the students could not explain what moderation was. This was more noticeable at the Year 10 level and with Mathematics students. This is a cause for concern and may need to be addressed in some manner by teachers and senior staff in schools, and possibly also by the Board of Studies. However, it should be recognised that the concept itself is a difficult one, especially for younger people. Suggestions made by students as to how to improve moderation included receiving more explanation from teachers and having Moderators visit classes.

The majority of administrators and teachers felt that involvement in the moderation process definitely contributes to teachers' professional development. It encourages teachers to program and use syllabus documents as well as providing a forum for gaining knowledge and exchanging ideas. These aspects appear to be the major benefits of the program. There were some drawbacks however, in that the moderation process involves teachers in attending meetings and being away from their classes and schools, sometimes for several days at a time. It was also felt that smaller schools suffer more from the disruptions caused by moderation than larger schools. Having teachers away from their schools not only causes administrative problems in finding suitable staff to supervise classes, but also in the fact that it causes disruptions to the normal flow of lessons. In addition, it adds to teacher workload because they not only have to prepare for the moderation meetings, but have to prepare for their classes while they are away. Leading on from this is the fact that some teachers appear to feel under continual pressure to carry out moderation procedures and make sure students are meeting work requirements. This responsibility appears to cause undue stress for over half of the teachers according to perceptions of both administrators and teachers. Given this, however, the majority of English teachers said they would prefer to teach moderated subjects, whereas the majority of Mathematics teachers would rather teach non-moderated subjects.

Most teachers, administrators and students felt that being involved in moderation procedures was an advantage to students. They felt that it provided students with structured courses and methods of assessment, assisted in motivating them to strive for higher standards and thus had some influence on improving standards, and allowed a comparison of grades with students throughout the Territory. Students, especially, felt that moderation procedures are a very fair way of assessing their work as they allow for a range of work to be assessed over a period of time and correct any teacher bias in marking. They also felt that the folios are a good reflection of their ability and that moderation promotes comparable grades across the Territory. However, approximately half of the students said they had problems in completing work for the folio. This mainly related to English. Some of the students also felt that there were possibly too many pieces required and that maybe the folio for presentation for moderation could involve fewer pieces of 'polished' work. They also felt that activities such as oral work were neglected in the presentation of a folio of written work. With Mathematics at the Year 10 level, there appeared to be less understanding by students of how the moderation process worked. This is probably due to the variation of moderation procedures at this level between the two subjects. With Year 10 Mathematics, teachers collect class tests and assignments and keep these in student assessment files, whereas with English students are required to complete set pieces of work for their folio and are responsible for placing work in their folio. Some of the Mathematics students felt that, as with English, they should choose their best work for the folio and not have everything placed in the folio/file for moderation. The majority of Year 11 students found moderation less of a problem than Year 10 students.

With regards to timing of moderation there appeared to be no problems with Year 11. With Year 10, however, some teachers and administrators felt that having to get the combined final mark, based on the moderated school mark and the student's score on the Common Instruments of Assessment, in by the end of Term Three excluded much of the work done in Term Four. It was also reported by teachers that once students knew their marks were complete, many put less effort into their work during Term Four and in some cases students missed school. Others felt that the timing was convenient as it left teachers a term in which they could choose what they would teach. A number of respondents also offered comments related to the timing of the Year 10 Common Instruments of Assessment tests.

Approximately half of each of the three groups of respondents – students, teachers, and administrators, felt moderation should be extended to other subjects while the other half said that it should not be extended to other subjects. The most popular choice of subjects for extension were Social Education and Science. A range of reasons was provided for both extending moderation and not extending it. It is thought by some to be a good way of ensuring students receive comparable teaching and assessment in a subject area. It also enhances the status of a subject, encourages students to produce their best work, and contributes to teachers' professional development. Reasons for not extending it to other subjects were that: teachers, students and schools are under enough pressure from the current moderation procedures; it is felt that unless resourced properly the extension of moderation would not be successful; English and Mathematics are seen as the two most important subjects and moderation need not be extended beyond these; and that students may suffer from the pressure of the extra workload of additional subjects being moderated. Taking these points into consideration, and the fact that the policy of the Board of Studies is to introduce moderation to other subject areas, both resource implications and the procedures to be employed should be important considerations before widespread moderation of other subjects is attempted.

ISSUES

From the discussion provided above, the following six issues have been highlighted for further consideration:

Students in general do not have a good understanding of the moderation process

Although students suggested greater explanation and visits to classes by moderators, it would appear that the major responsibility must continue to lie with the teachers of moderated subjects. Lack of understanding was more apparent at the Year 10 level, particularly in Mathematics. It should be noted, however, that moderation is a difficult concept. Even teachers probably don't understand it very well except in relation to a specific set of procedures.

Moderation causes some disruption to schools, and appears to cause greater problems for smaller schools

A major concern was the time out of classes of teachers and the number of teachers out of school at the one time. However, not all schools saw moderation as causing problems in this area.

Timing of moderation procedures

For Year 11, the timing of final moderation was generally considered appropriate.

For Year 10, respondents were evenly divided on the topic of timing. It was reported by some that one terms' work is not included in the assessment mark and some students may tend not to work once moderation is over and their marks have been recorded.

Nevertheless, after moderation is over many teachers appear to welcome the freedom to teach aspects of the curriculum they choose.

The issue of timing, related to the Year 10 Assessment Package as a whole, should be a subject of review.

Folio/Assessment File requirements in English and Mathematics

In English, many students felt they had difficulty in completing all of the pieces for the folio. They also saw the redrafting and polishing of work time consuming. Students suggested having less polished pieces for the folio.

Greater emphasis on recording and reporting oral achievements as part of the assessment in English was suggested by a number of students.

For Mathematics at Year 10, the possibility of giving students a choice of which pieces of work should be presented in the assessment file for moderation may need to be considered.

Extension of Moderation to Other Subjects

Among respondents, opinion appeared to be almost equally divided about extension of moderation to other subjects. Clearly, despite the possible benefits, a number of concerns exist particularly in relation to:

- any increase in workload for teachers
- the moderation approach to be adopted and its resource implications
- possible further pressure on school programs.

It would appear advisable to take account of such concerns when deciding on moderation requirements for Stage 1 of the new South Australian Certificate of Education (NT) and also in any consideration of further moderation at the Year 10 level.

Choice of other subjects to be moderated

If moderation were to be extended, SACE (Social Education) and Science were the most popular choices with respondents.

Trialling of a form of moderation is currently taking place for these subjects with full implementation planned for 1992.

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APPENDIX I

MODERATION QUESTIONNAIRE
YEARS 10 AND 11 MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSE SHEET

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out about school administrators' opinions and suggestions regarding Territory-wide Moderation.

If you have any queries regarding this questionnaire please contact me
Susan Luong-Van, Curriculum and Assessment Branch
GPO Box 4821 Darwin NT 0801
Telephone : (089) 89 6362

The comments you give are strictly confidential. Your name is not required on this form. Thankyou for your participation.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. SOME QUESTIONS WILL REQUIRE YOU TO WRITE AN ANSWER, WHILE OTHER QUESTIONS WILL REQUIRE YOU TO TICK THE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER.

QUESTIONS

Region: **East Arnhem** ☐ **Alice Springs** ☐
Barkly ☐ **Katherine** ☐ **Darwin** ☐

Currently working at a :

Junior High School **Yr. 8-10** ☐ **Govt. School** ☐
High School **Yr. 8-12** ☐ **Non-Govt. School** ☐
Secondary College **Yr. 11-12** ☐

Total number of classes:

No. of Year 10 classes ☐ **No. of Year 11 classes** ☐

Position in school:

Principal ☐ **A/Principal** ☐ **Other** ☐ **Please State**.....

QUESTIONS

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 1	Yes/No Year 10	11	No/Yes Year 10	11
Do you believe that you have a good understanding of the moderation process in these subject areas ?				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 2				
Do you believe that the teachers in your school have a good understanding of the moderation process ?	Yes/No Year 10	11	No/Yes Year 10	11
Please explain				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 3				
As far as you know, are there any provisions made at your school/college to teach new staff who are unfamiliar with moderation, about the requirements and processes of moderation?	Yes/No Year 10	11	No/Yes Year 10	11
If the answer is 'yes', what provisions are made ?				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 4				
Have you, or anyone else at the school/college, explained the moderation process to parents ?	Yes/No Year 10	11	No/Yes Year 10	11
Reasons				

Question 5	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Participating in the moderation process contributes to teachers' professional development. (please tick)					
Please explain					

Question 6

Do you agree that the moderation process is successful in achieving comparability of standards across schools/colleges in the Northern Territory ? (please tick)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Maths					
10					
11					
English					
10					
11					

Reasons

Question 7

	Eng. Yes/No Year		Maths. No/Yes Year	
Does your school face any kind of problem when moderation is in progress ?	10	11	10	11

Please explain

Question 8			
Does a small school/college suffer more from interruptions caused by the moderation process than a larger school ?	Yes	No	The Same
Please explain and suggest possible solutions.			

Question 9		
During the year, which aspects of the moderation process do you find most beneficial for yourself, staff and students. Please comment below.		
Yourself	**Staff**	**Students**

Question 10
Which aspects of the moderation process cause you the most problems during the year ?

Question 11	Eng. Yes/No Year 10	Eng. Yes/No Year 11	Maths. No/Yes Year 10	Maths. No/Yes Year 11
Does moderation place undue stress on yourself ?				
If your answer is 'Yes', please explain why this is so and suggest possible remedies/solutions.				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 12				
	Yes/No Year		No/Yes Year	
	10	11	10	11
Does moderation place undue stress on your students?				
If your answer is 'Yes', please explain why this is so and suggest possible solutions.				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 13				
	Yes/No Year		No/Yes Year	
	10	11	10	11
Does moderation place undue stress on your teachers ?				
If your answer is 'Yes', please explain why this is so and suggest possible remedies/solutions.				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 14				
Is the present moderation process being carried out at a convenient time for your teachers and students ?	Yes/No Year 10	11	No/Yes Year 10	11
Please explain				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 15				
Would you consider the present resources allocated to moderation to be adequate ?	Yes/No Year 10	11	No/Yes Year 10	11
Reasons				

Question 16

Should the moderation process be extended to other subject areas ?
Please comment

Question 17

If the moderation process is extended to other subject areas can you offer any suggestions as to the process which could be used ?

Question 18
What year level of secondary schooling is the most appropriate for external moderation to be introduced ? **Please explain**

Question 19
Would you like to make any further comments regarding moderation ?

Thankyou for your participation

APPENDIX II

MODERATION QUESTIONNAIRE
YEARS 10 AND 11 MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH

TEACHER RESPONSE SHEET

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out about teachers' opinions and suggestions regarding Territory-wide Moderation.

If you have any queries regarding this questionnaire please contact me
Susan Luong-Van, Curriculum and Assessment Branch
GPO Box 4821 Darwin NT 0801
Telephone : (089) 89 6362

The comments you give are strictly confidential. Your name is not required on this form. Thankyou for your participation.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. SOME QUESTIONS WILL REQUIRE YOU TO WRITE AN ANSWER, WHILE OTHER QUESTIONS WILL REQUIRE YOU TO TICK THE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER.

QUESTIONS

Region **East Arnhem** ☐ **Alice Springs** ☐
Barkly ☐ **Katherine** ☐ **Darwin** ☐

Currently teaching at a :

Junior High School **Yr. 8-10** ☐ **Govt. School** ☐
High School **Yr. 8-12** ☐ **Non-Govt. School** ☐
Secondary College **Yr. 11-12** ☐

Currently teaching:

No. of Year 10 English classes ☐ **No. of Year 11 English classes** ☐

No. of Year 10 Mathematics classes ☐ **No. of Year 11 Mathematics classes** ☐

QUESTIONS

Question 1	Years
How many years have you been teaching?	

Question 2	Eng. Yes Year 10	Eng. No Year 11	Maths. No Year 10	Maths. Yes Year 11
Do you believe that you are qualified to teach this moderated subject?				

Question 3	Eng. Number of Years		Maths. Number of Years	
	Year 10	Year 11	Year 10	Year 11
How many years have you been teaching moderated subjects at either Year 10 or Year 11 ?				

Question 4	Year Eng.	Year Maths.	A Lot More	More	The Same	Less
How does the workload in teaching moderated subjects compare with that of teaching other equivalent non-moderated subjects ?	10	10				
	11	11				

Question 5	Eng. Yes Year 10	Eng. No Year 11	Maths. No Year 10	Maths. Yes Year 11
Do you have a good understanding of the moderation process for your subject ?				

Question 6

If you had a choice between teaching moderated and non-moderated subjects, which would you prefer to teach ?
Please explain

Question 7

During the year, which aspects of the moderation process do **you** personally find most beneficial ?

Question 8
Which aspects of the moderation process cause you the most problems during the year ?

Question 9	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The moderation process contributes to teachers' professional development ?					
Please explain					

Question 10	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Moderation is achieving comparability of standards across the Northern Territory ?					
Please explain					

Question 11	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Work required for the student folios is a valid reflection of student ability ?					
Please explain					

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 12				
Who keeps student folios during the year ?	**Teacher** Year 10	11	**Student** Year 10	11
Reason				

Question 13
What have you found to be some of the major problems in getting student folios ready for moderation ?

Question 14			
	Very Sure	Sure	Not Very Sure
How sure are you that the assignment work handed in by students for moderation is their own work ?			
Please explain			

Question 15			
	Not a Problem	Problem	Big Problem
Does the ownership of student work pose a problem for moderation ?			
Solutions ?			

Question 16
In what ways you does moderation promote student learning ?

Question 17
In what ways does moderation inhibit student learning ?

Question 18	Eng. Yes Year 10	Eng. No Year 11	Maths. No Year 10	Maths. Yes Year 11
Does moderation place undue stress on your students?				
If your answer was 'Yes', please explain why this is so and suggest possible solutions.				

	Eng.		Maths.	
Question 19				
Does moderation place undue stress on yourself as a teacher ?	Yes Year 10	No 11	No Year 10	Yes 11
If your answer was 'Yes', please explain why this is so and suggest possible remedies/solutions.				

Question 20
What year level of secondary schooling is the most appropriate for moderation to be introduced ? **Please explain**

Question 21
If the moderation process is extended to other subject areas can you offer any suggestions as to the process which could be used ?

Thankyou for your participation

APPENDIX III

MODERATION QUESTIONNAIRE
YEARS 10 AND 11 MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH

STUDENT RESPONSE SHEET

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out about student opinions and suggestions regarding Moderation.

The comments you give are strictly confidential and will not be made available to any person. Your name is not required on this form. Thank you for your participation.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. SOME QUESTIONS WILL REQUIRE YOU TO WRITE AN ANSWER, WHILE OTHERS WILL ONLY REQUIRE TICKING THE ANSWER WHICH APPLIES TO YOU.

2. PLEASE NOTE, TICK ALL YEAR LEVELS AND SUBJECTS STUDIED.

3. THE QUESTIONS ARE DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS, **A** AND **B**. EVERYONE SHOULD ANSWER SECTION **A**. ANSWER SECTION **B**, ONLY IF YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THE QUESTIONS.

QUESTIONS

Name of school .....

Male ☐ **Female** ☐

Currently studying:

Year 10 English ☐ **Year 11 English** ☐

Year 10 Mathematics **Level** 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ **Year 11 Mathematics** ☐

SECTION A

QUESTIONS

	Response		
Question 1	Subject	Yes	No
Do you have an outline of work requirements for this semester/year ?			
	English		
	Mathematics		

	Response		
Question 2	**Subject**	**Yes**	**No**
Do you have an understanding of how this work will be assessed ?			
	English		
	Mathematics		

		Response		
Question 3	**Subject**	**Very Important**	**Important**	**Not Important**
How important is it to know what work you will be expected to do and how it will be assessed ?	English			
	Mathematics			

	Response		
Question 4	**Subject**	**Yes**	**No**
Have you come across the term 'MODERATION' ?			
	English		
	Mathematics		

Question 5	English	Mathematics
If your answer to Question 4 is yes, write in a few words what you understand by the term 'moderation'. For this question and any similar ones that follow, if your answer is the same for both subjects please write the answer across both subject areas.		

Response

Question 6	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Do you agree that it is possible to compare individual grades in the same subject, between classes taken by different teachers ?				

Response

Question 7	Subject	Yes	No
Has your teacher explained what pieces of work are required in your Folio ?			
	English		
	Mathematics		

	Response		
Question 8	**Subject**	**Yes**	**No**
Do you think that the Folio as it is at present, represents the full range of your class activities (e.g. debating, class tests, assignments, excursions etc.) ?			
	English		
	Mathematics		

Question 9	English	Mathematics
If your answer to Question 8 was **no**, what other activities would you like to see included in the Folio ? The suggestions you give would **not** be in addition to the work you are already doing for the Folios.		

Question 10					
How difficult do you find it to complete work for the Folio ?					
English	Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy	Don't Know
Mathematics	Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy	Don't know

Please give your reasons	
Mathematics	**English**

Question 11	**Subject**	**Response: Teacher**	**Response: Myself**
Do you keep your Folio or does your teacher keep it for you ?			
	English		
	Mathematics		

Thank you for your participation

SECTION B

ONLY ATTEMPT THESE QUESTIONS
IF YOU HAVE HAD MODERATION EXPLAINED TO YOU

		Response			
Question 12	**Subject**	Strongly Believe	Believe	Dis-believe	Strongly Disbelieve
Do you believe that the moderation process can assist in obtaining final grades which truly represent your abilities ?	English				
	Mathematics				

Question 13	
List the positive aspects about moderation	
English	**Mathematics**

Question 14	
List what you consider are the drawbacks of moderation.	
English	**Mathematics**

Question 15	
If you were asked how you could improve moderation, what would you say ?	
English	**Mathematics**

Response

Question 16		
Do you believe that it would be a good idea to extend moderation to other subjects ?	**Yes**	**No**
If your answer is '**Yes**', please name the other subjects that should be moderated.		
Whether your answer is 'yes' or 'no', please give reasons		

What other comments would you like to make regarding moderation ?

Thank you for your participation